nemo

the classic comics library

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The Graphic Genius Of Winsor McCay

The Golden Age Of Sunday Comics

An Annotated Interview With Al Capp

The Bald Iggle -- The Life It Ruins May Be Your Own!

nemo contents

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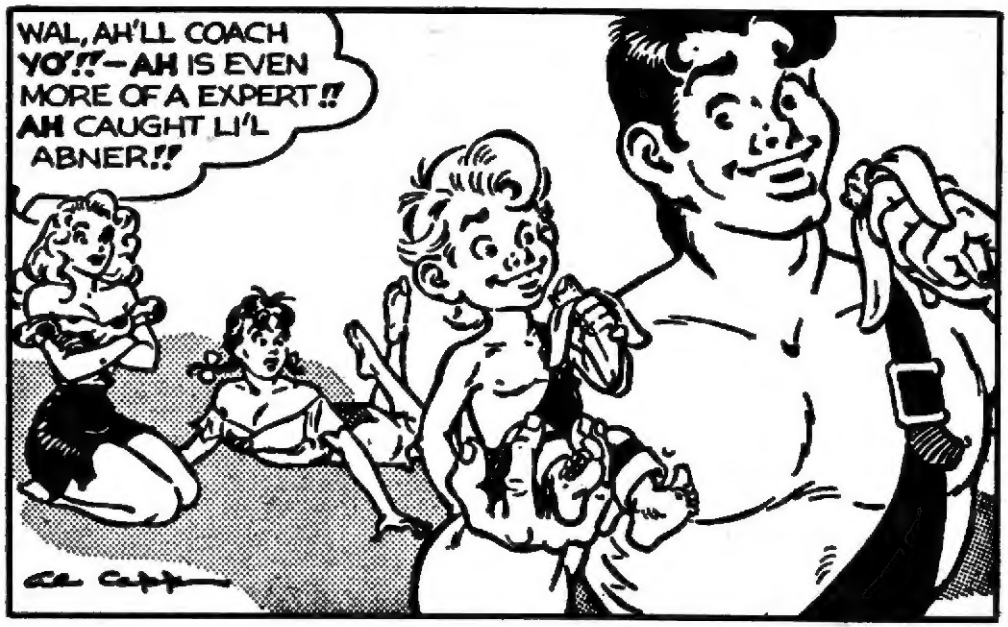

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Havin' His Druthers

Al Capp was, in his lifetime, one of America's most celebrated cartoonists, a public personality awash in frequent publicity and occasional controversy. But he seldom granted interviews. His most complete, however, was conducted by Rick Marschall, and it opens this issue's *Li'l Abner* focus. 7

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Publisher:
GARY G. GROTH

Editor:
RICHARD E. MARSCHALL

Design:
TOM MASON

Art Directors:
RICHARD E. MARSCHALL, TOM MASON

Production Manager:
KIM THOMPSON

Production Assistants:
PATTIE MULLINS-RANDALL, DAVE NELSON

Contributing Editors:
TOM ANDRAE, BILL BLACKBEARD, RICK NORWOOD, DONALD PHELPS, BHOB STEWART, MARTIN WILLIAMS

Contributors:
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Typesetting:
LINDA M. GORELL, ARLENE EASTER

Proofreading:
ANDREW CHRISTIE

Circulation:
JULIE STRNAD

Promotion:
ANDREW CHRISTIE

Supporting Institutions:
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8 All-*Little Orphan Annie* issue, including a complete reprint of a 1929 tale, an analysis of the series, and a biography of Harold Gray. Full-color cover by Gray.

10 Christmas issue, with a portfolio of cartoonists' Christmas cards. Also, Gustave Verbeek's *Upside-Downs*, Mell Lazarus interviewed, Ray Ewer, and *Mutt and Jeff*!

11 *Sam's Strip* premieres; "Dwig's" cartoons; giant Charles Dana Gibson portfolio; James Montgomery Flagg remembered; and the forgotten antics of *Slim Jim*.

12 The cartoonists who fought World War II; Frank King's most fantastic strip; Jack Williamson and Lee Elias's *Beyond Mars* SF strip; and penwoman Rose O'Neill.

13 Big half-year sequence from Will Gould's classic, violent *Red Barry*; *Major Hoople*; a look back at TAD; and another installment of *Sam's Strip*.

15 Milton Caniff's classic *Dickie Dare* reprinted; *Tim Tyler's Luck*; *Hairbreadth Harry* continues; an extra-long European heroes; plus reviews and letters.

16 A retrospective of *Huckleberry Finn's* comics adaptations; George Herriman's *Baron Bean*; *Hairbreadth Harry* concludes; the art of Joseph Clement Coll.

17 Special all-*Dick Tracy* issue, including a complete reprint of the "Brow" sequence, a rare interview, and an in-depth study of Tracy by Donald Phelps.

18 Al Capp is featured, with his final interview, a hilarious speech, and the complete 1955 "Bald Iggle" sequence. Also, the graphic art of Winsor McCay, and *Sam's Strip*.

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Editorial

It is already issue 18 of *NEMO* and we're only getting around to Al Capp! This illustrates the wealth of great vintage material in comics' vast archive; it says nothing about Capp's relative importance in comics history. Other things merely got here first.

Capp's place is assured, and will only grow with time. He was one of the pre-eminent *users* of the comic strip's formal potential—McCay, Feininger, Kelly, Gray, Eisner: there have been few others. Capp's writing was first-rate; his characterizations were multitudinous and superb; his artwork was stunning; his compositions clever and arresting. For pure humor he was unequalled, and he blithely produced some of the most devastating satire and parody in our history. What elevates Capp even further—as we trust this *NEMO* issue will attest—is his unfailingly prescient comments on human nature. Like fine wine, Capp improves with age.

Some comic artists are appreciated in our pages because of their antiquated charm, the musty perfume they carry from another age. But Capp—who began *Li'l Abner* more than half a century ago—strikes us more and more as timeless, ageless, and priceless.

CAPP'S OFF

The interview in this issue I was fortunate to conduct with Capp at a critical juncture in his career; he unburdened himself and was as reflective as I had ever seen him. It has appeared elsewhere, but has been corrected and updated. Likewise the sequence we offer, The Bald Iggle, appeared in a public-domain reprint book of the 1950s, but stands up well and illustrates in itself many of the points raised by and about Al Capp in this issue.

There are no artists working today fit to wear the mantle worn by Al Capp, even by reputation. I was nonplussed recently when I asked my students at the School of Visual Arts who knew of *Li'l Abner* and Al Capp—and only half of the class raised hands. Besides making me feel old, the mini-survey astounded me. Once again we are met with an example of America losing touch with a vital part of its cultural heritage. For Al Capp was not merely a great comic artist, but an important figure in America letters—and the fields are *not* mutually exclusive!

The exercise merely redoubled my resolve to have *NEMO* continue to bring masterpieces to the fore. If you (shudder!) are not much acquainted with *Li'l Abner*, this issue will be a good introduction. And if you (sigh) are already warmly inclined toward Capp's genius, we hope you appreciate this tribute.

With more frequent publication, we find ourselves, or at least *this* we does, looking down the ole road to plan upcoming issues. To lift the flap of the circus tent, we can state that we're planning major examinations of the *Yellow Kid* and *Katzenjammer Kids*, of Western strips, and of social-protest cartoons. *NEMO* will also begin a new series on Pioneers of the Comic Strip, looking at some historical figures who are usually overlooked.

We always solicit articles and reprint material, but wonder specifically if any readers have any special contributions for the focus on Western strips, for an examination of the cartoon and the automobile, or a special-issue profile of Billy DeBeck.

APPEALS

Watch this space, too, for information about *NEMO*'s drive to persuade the U.S. Postal System to issue a commemorative series of stamps on American comics. The centennial of the comic strip is still a decade away, but already such a cultural recognition is overdue. We will be collecting signatures, petitioning the appropriate authorities, and enlisting allies in and out of the profession. Put your thinking caps on and, as I say, watch this space.

So often the bearer of glad tidings, it grieves us to be the bearer of sad tidings. Two friends we acknowledged in *NEMO* #15 have passed away.

Our glowing book review of Bill Overgard's wonderful *Rudy* strip coincided with the decision by Bill and his syndicate, United Media, to cancel the strip in December of 1985. I had business at the syndicate and was dropping off copies of Number 15 hot off the presses, and as I handed them to Sid Goldberg he informed me of the difficult decision.

RIPs

Rudy's qualities and charm are outlined in the review, as are United Media's gallant efforts to support and promote the unique strip. Since Bill Overgard retired from *Steve Roper* as well, he is currently absent from comics pages; a regrettable state of affairs. But he's active with Leonard Starr in script-writing for TV animation, so he'll be happy and prosperous while we await his return.

To close out our page, however, is the saddest task of all, reporting the death of a friend. Within days of *NEMO* #15's publication, where the letter column prints a cheery note from Jack Kent and our gushing response, Jack—a dear, gentle soul of massive but unobtrusively displayed talent—died.

I met his strip, *King Aroo*, through Jim Ivey. When I was a boy trading originals, and had never heard of the strip, Jim—with missionary zeal—*gave* me some originals, guaranteeing I'd fall in love. I did.

I met Jack telephonically when I interviewed him for his entry in *The World Encyclopedia of Comics*. Our friendship commenced immediately, and we spoke, and corresponded, through the years. I treasure his drawings at my daughter's birth; the JK II family Christmas cards; so much else. . .

King Aroo is one of precious few strips in the *Krazy Kat* and *Barnaby* mode. Naturally it was minimally appreciated, and played to a small but enthusiastic cult audience in the 1950s. Stanleigh Arnold of the *San Francisco Chronicle*—bless his soul—single-handedly kept *King Aroo* afloat for a few years after its syndicate dropped it. Then. . . Jack Kent turned to children's books, where he made a reputation, earned some money, and won some awards. His story had a happy professional ending, but we always feel a selfish sense of loss, and sadness, when one of the good guys leaves us.

In that recent letter column we promised a retrospective look at Jack's work. Now it will be a memorial, and will appear soon. Jim Ivey's guarantee is still good: If you don't know *King Aroo*, just seeing it will make you like it.

Kinda like meeting Jack Kent.

Richard Marschall.

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF NEMO

KERRY DRAKE—One of the most exciting of comics' responses to *Dick Tracy* was *Kerry Drake*, about the exploits of hardboiled cops and weird villains. Drawn by Al Andriola and written by Allen Saunders (a fact revealed in *NEMO* for the first time), our next issue features a complete episode from 1949! Thrills, mystery, action. . . and an unlikely hero, the cartoonist Sketch McKorn!

NIGHTMARISH DAY DREAMS—In *NEMO* #10 we featured the bizarre *Upside-Down* strips of Gustave Verbeck. Next issue we focus on an equally unique creation, *The Terrors of the Tiny Tads*, in which the young heroes face a weekly assortment of menacing composite beasts. A one-of-a-kind forgotten masterpiece of the macabre from 1905-10!

PENMAN OF THE PAST—A generous sampling of the stylish cartoons and illustrations of Russell Patterson. After John Held, he was arbiter of Jazz-age fashions and visual chronicler of the speakeasy generation. Memorable cartoons and brilliant panoramas.

PLUS—Frank King's biting political cartoons, and more!

"Saying Something About the Status Quo:"

Al Capp, Master Satirist Of the Comics

I was Al Capp's editor for a time at the Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate. Even before that, however, I had known him through the conservative movement. But my longest visit with him was in his Cambridge home on the afternoon of October 16, 1977, just after the formal announcement that Li'l Abner *was to be discontinued.*

That conversation turned out to be his last major interview. His emotional attitudes and the state of his health kept Capp from the public the last two years of his life.

One would have supposed that Capp would be morose at such a time. His strip, after a nosedive in circulation, was to be killed. His daughter had committed suicide in his garage several weeks earlier. His health—from an ill-fitting false leg, to an atrophied "good" one, to a bad case of emphysema—was pretty rotten. ("... although I'm not going to do anything sensible like giving up these things," he said, lighting up one cigarette while another's smoke still circled his head. Another quip: "It's simple. I enjoy smoking more than breathing.")

But he said for his age (68) he shouldn't be complaining about his health. His daughter's death might have been, in a strained sense, a relief, as she had been emotionally troubled for many years. (Of far greater impact was the death, several weeks after the interview, of his beloved granddaughter, a reporter for the Newark (NJ) Star-Ledger. *She was killed instantly when her car was hit at a red light by a drunken driver with no license. She sat in on this interview.)*

We touched on many aspects of his career that day, but certainly not all: he preferred to let the controversy with Ham Fisher smolder to cold ashes and, as for later personal things like the trumped-up charges that he had made improper advances to female college students, not only were they impolitic to raise, but he had made all the statements, official and unofficial, years before.

Some things I also declined to pursue because Capp had forgotten facts or his prejudices would have made further grilling useless. Specifically, I refer to his statements about Frank Frazetta which, after consulting many sources including the Frazettas, I concluded to be wrong. In his second reference to Phil May, he cited the English cartoonist's "tight" style: in fact, May was famous for his incredibly loose style.

Many of Capp's recollections were recalled verbatim from other interviews and previous conversations with me; perhaps it was due to the great number of interviews he had granted or the gift of total recall coupled with the happiest phrasing of thoughts. No matter: his final interview nonetheless provided many important insights into this man who kept America laughing for 43 years.

This interview originally ran, in somewhat similar form, in The Comics Journal *#54, 1980.*

By RICK MARSCHALL

He was born Alfred Gerald Caplin in New Haven, Connecticut September 28, 1909; forty years later, "Capp" would become his legal surname.

As a youth, Capp saw his career, if not his outlook on life, affected by two events. When he was nine, he was run over by an ice truck and lost a leg; after a year's convalescence, he was fitted with a wooden appendage. At 15, he left home temporarily to join a chum in hitchhiking through the South. Capp got his first experience with mountain folk (after bunking with an uncle, a Memphis rabbi) and was alternately charmed by Southern people and shocked at segregation.

The Caplin children were amused by the drawings of their father, an amateur cartoonist, and young Al decided on art school instead of college. It turned out to be a succession of art schools, as the impoverished artist kept one step ahead of tuition bills.

***Mister Gilfeather*—later *Col. Gilfeather*—drawn by the young Capp for the Associated Press in 1932.**

MISTER GILFEATHER
by A. G. Caplin
I DIDN'T KICK WHEN SHE MADE ME CARRY MY OWN CLUBS - BUT WHEN MASHIE GAME!
SHE GRABS MY AND PLAYS MY - I PROTEST!
BEAR UP, PETE - THINK OF THE FUN SHE'S HAVING! YOU VOTED FOR GIRL CADDIES - AND YOU'VE GOT ONE!
6-28

MISTER GILFEATHER
by A. G. Caplin
- MR. GILFEATHER - MEET "SOAPY" WATERS, - HE'S THE NEW DISHWASHER HERE AT "THE MANSION HOUSE" - THE PLACE IS SO CROWDED WITH THE SUMMER FOLKS, THEY AIN'T NO PLACE TO PUT HIM EXCEPT IN WITH YOU! - - WE LIKE TO GIVE THE BREAKS TO THEM AS PAYS REGULAR!
HOWDY DO!
TONIGHT
INSURANCE
AS WELCOME AS A HORNET
7-9

"Harry Resnick [Capp's uncle] called the Associated Press and asked them to see me. They did, and they actually gave me a job drawing a panel called *Col. Gilfeather*, which I knew would be a terrible job. I knew it because when I did the transition strips from Dick Dorgan's—he was TAD's [Thomas Aloysius Dorgan's] brother, and he drew like a sort of ruptured, blind TAD—I copied his stuff and it was marvelous; all the guys around there said 'You've got it.'

"But I thought, 'This isn't the way I draw,' and I began doing this tremendous imitation of Phil May. He was a great artist, and I was copying his stuff from his prime. I was in my 20s—I didn't know anything but that I wanted to draw like him—but I *was* closer to Phil May than I was to TAD. I don't know why anyone at AP accepted that stuff, but they did, for about three months or so. It was awful, but I was goddamned certain that that's where I was going.

"When I left *Gilfeather*, Milt Caniff took it over and probably made it a masterpiece.

"Now, after I had done *Col. Gilfeather* for a few months, that's when I knew—or thought I knew—something more about anatomy, plots, perspective. I had *enough* anyway, that I thought I could hit the syndicates again. I got a job with Ham Fisher, as you know—that's really not worth [talking about]—but anyway, I did do *Li'l Abner*."

During his days on *Col. Gilfeather*, Capp lived the mad, exciting (and impoverished) life of a Greenwich Village artist. Legend has it that Ham Fisher, then scoring big with *Joe Palooka*, spotted Capp carrying a portfolio and bet his chauffeur that the fellow was a cartoonist. Verification supposedly led to employment, with Capp as one of a long line of underpaid and underthanked Fisher ghosts.

Capp introduced a hillbilly character, Big Leviticus, into an episode and soon, as Bill Blackbeard has said, was "feeling his ink." He longed to do his own strip and, of course, *Li'l Abner* was the concept he worked up.

Fisher reportedly became outraged that an assistant would desire independence, or was jealous, or whatever, and a long-running feud was inaugurated. Its highlights were Capp's digs at Fisher in *Abner* and in articles ("I Remember Monster" for the *Atlantic Monthly*) and Fisher's annual assertion in *Palooka* that Leviticus was the first comic strip hillbilly. Readers weren't aware that Capp was the anonymous creator of what Fisher was touting and Fisher himself obviously didn't read *Barney Google*. The low points of the feud occurred when it became an obsession with Fisher. He photostated and enlarged panels from *Abner* which contained obvious phallic symbols (in various stages of employment) and sent them almost everywhere, including the National Cartoonists Society Ethics Committee. When it was discovered that Fisher had doctored the examples, he was bounced out of the NCS himself. He later committed suicide.

"Anyhow, I brought the *Abner* samples up to King Features and they offered me 250 bucks a week, which is the equivalent of a thousand—even more—today.

"But the big guy there—[Joseph] Connolly—said, 'Great strip, great art, yes sir. A couple of things though: That Abner's an idiot. Make him a nice kid, with some saddlestripe shoes on him. And Daisy Mae's pretty, but how about some pretty clothes? As a matter of fact, why not forget the mountain bit and move them all to New Jersey; and that Mammy, she's got to go—you need a sweet white-haired lady.'

"Well, I thought all about it and I realized that I would have had *Polly and Her Pals*! But I would have had 250 bucks a week, wouldn't I? Well, I was pretty sick about it. I walked up to United Features—[Monte] Bourjaily was the head of it then—and they looked at it, showed it to Colin Miller and the other salesmen, were amazed by it, and wanted to take it out just as it was. They offered me 50 bucks a week—which was

Collection of Stuart Reisbord

the lowest—and I grabbed it and forgot King Features because I was now able to do my own strip exactly as I wanted to. Later on, of course, they paid me $5,000 a week, because there was no way they could get out of it."

Capp had told the traditional tale of *Li'l Abner's* sale a thousand times. His late uncle Harry, at that time an agent of sorts, informed me that the problem with King Features was simply that they took too long to respond. I'm sure the truth is in both recollections. Capp's brother Elliott—a veteran comic strip writer himself—has told me that Al's straight biography and his embellished versions of it are equally fascinating.

Did Capp have editorial control? "Well, the syndicate had control. I could be fired at any time—they owned it. I couldn't take that after a while and said, 'I'm quitting. You can keep the strip.' I meant it.

"They got all upset, of course, and after a lot of running around they offered me a deal of a brand new contract, with new terms, and at the end of 10 years, the strip would become mine. Now you see, there was an unwritten law that a successful strip had a life span of 12 years; I think that was Bill Conselman's rule—he wrote *Ella Cinders*—and it was figured that a strip had had it after a dozen years. Of course after 10 years I was going hotter than ever.

"Conselman, by the way, quit strips himself after not too long, but went on to another career as a great screenwriter at Fox. It was his partner, Charlie Plumb, who was supposed to be a thief and a drunk and was chased to Mexico by several ex-wives or somesuch thing."

Li'l Abner's dates are August 13, 1934-November 13, 1977 (Sadie Hawkins week). It was an arresting strip, with frenetic action and bold color. "And it was exactly in the beginning as it is now," said Capp, "drawn a little differently of course, but the relationships were the same in that first year."

By 1941 *Abner* was running in 400 newspapers; eventually it would more than double that figure to 900. In spite of suspicious syndicate claims at its death (350 papers), in 1975—when it was conceded to be ailing—the strip was still appearing in quite a respectable 386 domestic and 52 foreign papers. And those figures don't count daily and Sunday editions as separate papers—a trick favored by some syndicates.

Originally, *Abner's* Sunday top-strip was *Washable Jones*. It was a wonderful fantasy-strip about a 12-year-old hill boy who fished in a magic fishing hole and had talking trees for friends, and it deserves reprinting today.

"I'm so delighted that you remember it," Capp told me. "It was fun, but the syndicate decided they wanted a full page and that was it. Then came *Advice fo' Chillun*, which was great fun. That ran for years."

I told Capp that hanging on the wall of the Museum of Cartoon Art in Port Chester, New York is an *Advice fo' Chillun* homily sent in by little Mort Walker of Kansas City.

"He sent that in? To me? Well, bless us. That's great. He must have been around 12 at the time."

I asked Capp about favorite stories and characters.

"I loved Fosdick. You ask about [Chester] Gould's reaction: Once we met and he said that *Dick Tracy* is the only major comic strip with another major comic strip doing full-time press agentry for it. And that's right.

"Apassionata Von Climax ran for several years and—isn't it strange?—never got us any complaints from editors. That was curious. I remember one of the things I didn't use was a male character named Bertram Bullsh. His name ended right at the 'sh.'"

"The Shmoo of course was a favorite, not only for commercial reasons, but historically. Of course, it was merchandised to death—I think they even had Shmoo toilet seats—and after a while I didn't want to be reminded of it. I had a lot of other things, but I had to come back to it a couple of times. It was never any fun, though, except in the first story."

I told him the Bald Iggie story was a favorite with fans and that in 1975 I suggested to him a similar story with a bleak ending.

"How did it end? The Shmoos' end was being beaten back into the Valley of the Shmoon—I think. I don't know. You see, I'm so embarrassed by my endings I try to forget them. But if I do look back, they're all right. They really are.

"I can remember just about everything. The stuff I remember is the great stuff—and that's the stuff I did last week. Everything ahead of me is horror."

In 1947, Capp sued United Features for $14 million in another dispute to garner more editorial freedom. ("One thing I received almost immediately was 14 million denunciatory editorials from *Editor and*

"The stuff I remember is the great stuff—and that's the stuff I did last week."

DEAR READERS
TO SCORES OF LETTERS ASKING WHAT EVER BECAME OF THE ORIGINAL BIG LEVITICUS AND HIS "FAMILY" WE CAN ONLY REPLY WITH---
AH WONDER WHEN BIG LEVITICUS GOIN' TSIT A YUKKASHUN FUN THAT 'ERE SCHOOL.
AH DUNNO, NAMMY. HE BEN 'THEAH FO' TWO YEAHS SENCE HE DONE TOOK A LIL' POT-SHOT AT THAT REVANOOAH.
HULLO THEAH FOLKS! AH GOT A LETTAH FO' YO' ALL!
DOGGONE! MEBBE FUN LEVITICUS. HOW BAOUT READIN' IT FO' US, STOOKEY?
LEVI MUS' OF GOT SUM-H'T FELLER T'WROTE IT FO' 'IM.
AW AH DONE READ IT AWREDDY. HE SAY HE TRAHD TSIT AWAY FUN THE REFOH'M SCHOOL BUT THEY GOT 'IM AGIN.
DOGGONE 'UM!
BET HE BOPPED 'EM PLENTY!
SEZ A FELLA TOLE 'IM THAT FELLA, PALOOKA, GIMME BE IN VICKSBUHG FO' A EXBISHUN. SEZ HE GOT A FEUD WITH PLOOKA.
THAT'S RIGHT BY CRICKETY! GOTTA WIPE OUT OLE FAMLY HONAH!
YASSUH---TOO OLE TO SEE!
HE SAY HEPZIBAH SHOULD TAKE HIS POWLIN' PIECE AN GIT DOWN T'VICKSBUHG. HE SAY SHE KIN SHOOT ALMOS' S'GOOD AS HE KIN.
YASSUH--SHE OLD ENOUGH NOW, JES' TWELVE YEAH OLD. UNCLE MOSE COUNTED UP FO' US.
SHE WAS BOWN THE YEAH AN SHOT THE 'SELBY BROTHAHS.
R'MEMBAH, CHILE--- DON' WASTE NO BALL. POWDAH AN' BALL PRITTY 'SPENSIVE GIT 'UM BORE IN TWO SHOTS.
HAW!!

Below and Overleaf: Excerpts from the "Big Leviticus" series in *Joe Palooka*, ghosted by Al Capp. Fisher would periodically re-run pages to remind readers who was the comics' first hillbilly. He would not remind them who ghosted the art.

I'SPOSE IT'S ONE 'A THEM PROMOTERS - WELL NO MORE FIGHTS IN TH' TANKS FER ME, UH-UH!
- WHAT TH' !! HOLY SMOKES - LEVITICUS!!
D-DON'T SHOOT !!
HAW! - AH HEARD YO' WUZ HEAH, SO AH COME UP! AH AINT GONNA SHOOT - AH FIGGERED AH AINT LAWRN NAWTHIN' - AH WANTA STAY WITH YO' FELLAS, SO AH WALKED HEAH, KNOWED YO' WUZ HEADED THISAWAY!
HE WANTS T'STAY - WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO? GRACIOUS SAKES!
HIDE ME! HIDE ME! DON'T LET 'EM GIT ME!
'FER GOSH SAKES! WHO'S AT? - YER MOB -
IS LEVITICUS WITH EAH?
- NOSSUH! - HITS THE TROOANT OFFICAH! - AH KNOWS HIS VOICE! - HE'S A-COMIN' FO' ME!! -
OH YEAH? - C'MON IN!
AH DEMANDS THET YO' GIVE ME THET CHILE ON ACCOUNT OF HE'S ON'Y FIFTEEN!
MAMMY AN' PAPPY SAID AH COULD COME! CONSARN THET SCHOOL! AN' THET TEACHER!
YO' COMIN' WITH ME, LEVI! TH' SCHOOL BOA'D AN' NOT YO' KIN IS RUNNIN' THINGS! GIT ALONG 'ELSE YOU'LL GIT A HIDIN!
FIRST GRADE! - FIFTEEN! OH-OH! BIG AS SIX ELEPHANTS! HO-HO-HO! GOT WHISKERS LIKE A WALRUS! WOW! SHOT SIX REVENOO MEN! OH-H-H!!!
AIN'T THAT A SHAME! I'MAKE A BIG FELLA LIKE HIM GO BACK TO SCHOOL !!

Publisher," Capp quipped.) In the end he settled out of court with what *Time* termed "calculated magnanimity." The upshot was more and more freedom but inevitably less and less of a working relationship with UFS. In my days there—more than 10 years after Capp switched syndicates—there were still strong feelings of relief on the part of minor employees who were caught in tugs-of-war between meddling editors and a fussy artist.

As much as most modern strips, *Li'l Abner* was the result of a sort of production line. After the first couple of months of the strip, Capp employed two full-time assistants, who, remarkably, remained for the entire run. Other artists, though, came and went; the last penciller was Stan Drake, who Capp characterized as "a fantastic artist and a guy who never ages."

"When I say 'I' I mean these two guys equally with me. I'm the guy who signed the strip, and I made up our minds about what we would do but both of them had just as much effect on the strip as I: Andy Amato and Harvey Curtis.

"I only inked the faces and hands; once in a while, I inked Abner. Walter Johnson would do a lot of the inking. Bob Lubbers, the last few years, too. We worked with Lubbers in many ways, and he was always very good, doing exactly what we wanted and on time. There are many sorts of things I'd do in the busy years that needed help, extra artwork."

I told Capp I had some half-inked originals with extremely tight pencils and asked whether this was because he wanted "his look" to come through in the finished product.

"No, that's just the way I drew. That's the way Phil May drew. I went to art schools; never took a correspondence course—didn't trust them. Although Milt [Caniff] told me years later that they were actually damn good courses."

At this juncture I felt constrained to ask Capp about one of his assistants—Frank Frazetta—whom he hadn't mentioned.

"I'm a little embarrassed by Frazetta. First, I think he's a great artist, marvelous. I think also that there's an inescapable cheapness about what he does that's going to leave him either famous or forgotten—I don't know which. It isn't art, but to me it's great stuff. Everything Frazetta does I think is marvelous.

"But this claim that he worked for me for several years—it may have seemed like several years, but in reality it was for under a year. Oh, he may have come back for two months at one point, that kind of thing.

"I suppose it's no secret about Frazetta that he's not the most reliable guy in the world, and that's what was wrong with us. It was just impossible to expect Frazetta to get a Sunday page in when he said he was going to.

"Frazetta's no Great Artist of the Century. Let the fans have an artist, for Chrissake. What the hell do they know? Now I've heard that Frazetta's supposed to have worked for me from 1952 to '57; I don't think so. Of course, I'm no better at dates than him, but I've asked my assistants and they can't remember more than a year split up among many."

I told him that *Abner* originals from 1952 to '57 are magically higher in price because the figures are supposedly Frazetta's and not another ghost's.

"Let the collectors have their fun. But I can't believe it was five years that he worked on *Abner*. No way. I'm so glad that they've switched from Charlie Schulz to Frazetta. I think it was a great switch.

"*Peanuts* is a great strip, but no one has ever said, publicly, that they don't like *Peanuts*. But then no one has ever said they don't like motherhood or the Bill of Rights. I'm sure there are such people in the country, but they keep it quiet; it would take guts to say those things publicly—especially about *Peanuts*. In America you *must* like *Peanuts*, even if you really don't."

I asked Capp about his influences and favorite cartoonists as a child.

"I grew up with Opper [*Happy Hooligan, Alphonse and Gaston*] and Sterrett [*Polly and Her Pals*]—now Sterrett! That's the guy who was the greatest. To think that a whole generation has grown up worshipping Picasso when the guy who did it far better was Sterrett. Far better than Picasso—and Herriman. I like Herriman—he has his own special place—but I love Sterrett; he belongs someplace else. He was a great man. I grew up on *Judge* and *Life* magazines and read what every other kid read. I loved the comics from the start, especially when I read that Bud Fisher married a fresh Ziegfeld Follies girl every couple of years—and could afford them all. 'That's for me,' I said."

Were there any special literary humorists who were influential to him?

"Dickens, Benchley, Tarkington—he was a special favorite. I really didn't like most of the *New Yorker* writers, but Perelman, the way he fooled around with words, a master. I loved him because I understood everything he said! I can't forget to mention the great army of American humorists—totally unknown but named Nat and Sol—all of whom were writing for

radio. They were good, but nobody knew who they were. *Today* nobody knows who they were, but they were the great American humorists."

Since much of the art in *Li'l Abner* was someone else's, I asked Capp if the stories were 100 per cent his.

"I'd write them in longhand at my desk, on yellow legal sheets. And I'd recite each line to the guys as I wrote and we'd knock it around. And that's how it worked for years.

"I would say, when we needed a new story, 'How about this?' and, 'Let's try that,' until we were howling with laughter—and that's how we wrote a story.

"I would know vaguely where a story was going. I had an ending, but I left myself enough choice as I went along to go anywhere with it; I would always come back to that ending.

"I found out through terrible, terrible agonies that you damn well better have that ending or you'll wind up wanting to kill yourself."

Many syndicates demand of their artists that stories be no longer than 13 weeks. Did Capp have any such strictures?

"I would run a story as long as I wanted. You see, from very early, the people at United wouldn't dare make suggestions to me—they were scared to death of me. Except for one guy, Bill Laas; he had not the faintest respect for me. As a matter of fact, it was one day he said rather contemptuously, 'Hey, don't think of yourself as another Dickens. You're a guy who knows a trick: Abner doesn't marry Daisy Mae. Be grateful you thought of it, because that's what makes the strip go—nothing else.'

"Well, I was horrified. So I got them married. And it went. And we go a lot of publicity besides."

A goodly number of critics think that much of the life went out of the strip at that time (1952)—not out of the quality of the writing or art, but because of the undeniable gimmick. It seems that a virtual dare is what led to the most famous marriage of the decade.

There was a mutual admiration between Capp and comics' other master storyteller, Harold Gray, even while the two were on different sides of the ideological fence.

"I met Harold Gray only once. When I was younger I loved what he was doing—I though it was the most dangerous crap I had ever seen but I loved it and how he did it. See, I knew that that guy could really draw—these insane figues with about as much vivacity as the Easter Island statues, but they were real and forbidding and said the most incredible things.

"The only time I ever met him he took me aside and said, You're making some money now. Buy a farm and build a great big stone wall around it because they're coming—the bums and the Russians. Well, I said, 'Thank you very much,' and promptly bought a farm."

I remarked that most critics of Gray, even when they had reasoned arguments, assume that he was an inept realist, when he was in fact a superb expressionist. I fear that even Capp's brother, Elliott, who wrote *Little Orphan Annie* from 1968 to 1974, fell into this trap, along with Tex Blaisdell, the artist.

"Oh boy, you bet your life Gray knew how to draw. He drew his way and he perfected that way so that unless you took him very seriously, you were going to do a flimsy and totally unvonvincing copy, and that's what they did. And Elliott, the lovable idiot—forgive me for saying this about my brother!—decided to do a tongue-in-cheek *Orphan Annie*. It was horrifying; it's meant to be done straight. Gray meant every bit of it. Of course, Elliott didn't enjoy doing it."

At a symposium in 1975 on the shrinking size of comics, everyone waited for Capp to climax the jeremiads of Chester Gould and Roy Crane, but he stunned the audience by preaching accommodation down the line.

"Sure it hurt," he recalled. "But I figured, what the hell, if everbody else is [shrinking their formats], why can't I do it? And I could, except that it took some of the heart out.

"But the great guy, the guy who really stays with this, is Milt Caniff. He keeps on doing that goddam strip [*Steve Canyon*] as beautifully as he ever did and writes as gracefully. It runs so small I don't know if anyone can read it, but he still does it."

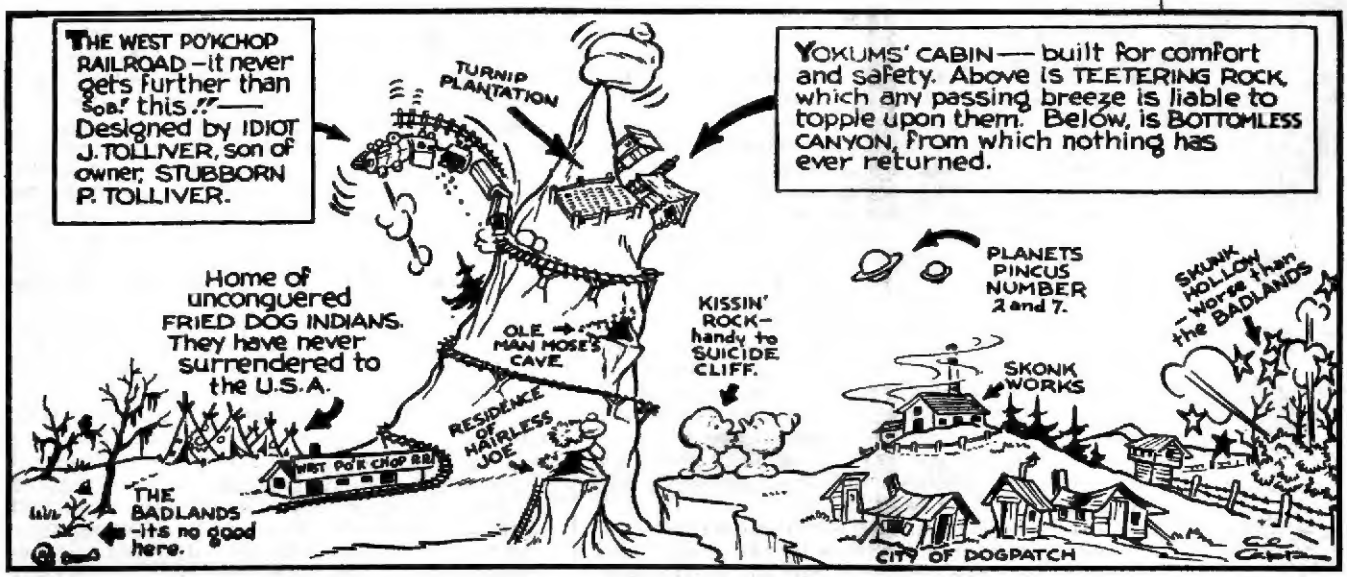
In that period of experimentation with shrinking formats, Capp overcompensated in trying to make local editors happy. The stories were too short; his strips began to look empty and readers felt cheated by too many one-panel dailies.

An impression of his later strips sticks in the mind as eight or nine huge words crowding out a couple of foreheads—maybe tomorrow's paper would tell us who uttered the dialogue. Of course it wasn't that bad, but the final years of *Abner* illustrated one of the widest extremes in the career of any American cartoonist. It seemed that the man who had understood—and used—the art form as totally as anyone before or since had utterly lost touch with its elements.

"For the last few years, editors and readers who paid for the strip were being screwed," he confessed.

"But you see, it was too late then. I came up [to a syndicate meeting we had concerning *Li'l Abner's* circulation] whistling in the dark. I was totally unconvinced that I could do it any longer. The heart had gone out of me, maybe that year or so—before there were any great cancellations—and I knew it. It was time to think about getting off the stage. I meant every word I said [to salesmen to inspire them to boost the strip's circulation]; I felt I could do it again. But behind that I had another feeling: 'Jesus, I gotta get away from the studio.'

"Sterrett! That's the guy who was the greatest. To think that a whole generation has grown up worshipping Picasso. . ."


THE WEST PO'K CHOP RAILROAD—it never gets further than SOB! this!"—Designed by IDIOT J. TOLLIVER, son of owner, STUBBORN P. TOLLIVER.
TURNIP PLANTATION
YOKUMS' CABIN—built for comfort and safety. Above is TEETERING ROCK, which any passing breeze is liable to topple upon them. Below, is BOTTOMLESS CANYON, from which nothing has ever returned.
Home of unconquered FRIED DOG INDIANS. They have never surrendered to the U.S.A.
OLE MAN MOSE'S CAVE
KISSIN' ROCK—handy to SUICIDE CLIFF.
PLANETS PINCUS NUMBER 2 and 7.
SKUNK HOLLOW—Worse than the BADLANDS
SKONK WORKS
RESIDENCE OF HAIRLESS JOE
WEST PO'K CHOP RR
THE BADLANDS—its no good here.
CITY OF DOGPATCH

"I thought about ghosts, but I said, Screw it—I'm not going to give *Abner* to some kid to change. Let him do his [own] stuff while we bury *Abner* honorably. It would have been nice to include a final note on the last strip: 'On Monday this space will be occupied by a fresh new cartoonist.' "

Another inescapable factor is that when Capp's politics—or targets—changed, there were an awful lot of editors gunning for him.

"I really don't think my politics changed. You see, I've always been for those who are being shamed, disgraced, ignored by other people. That group has changed. Now it's the poor bastard who's rich—well, I don't mean rich, and of course I always had Bullmoose—but the poor son-of-a-bitch who *worked*, who was being denounced by the liberals. For Chrissake, these people are keeping the country afloat. They were denounced, and it got me damn mad. So I talked about it, and I continued to talk, because one of the things I found was that when I was all for the liberal attitudes—and I believed in them—the conservatives showed me only icy contempt. I never got a letter from them. They just hated me. When I began attacking liberals, the conservatives maintained their icy silence, but the liberals began denouncing me by the thousands of letters every week.

"I started asking myself, with these letters, 'How could a girl from Smith *know* this language?' and 'How the hell did a clergyman learn that expression?' They denounced me in the foulest terms. And I must say that it convinced me that if this is what attracted liberals, I'd better keep at it.

"When I started to knock the liberals, there came such a deluge of hate mail—instantly my radio commentary show was ended; my TV show, which would have started in 56 markets, never began; I was never again asked as a guest on the air. Critics who had recently called me the great comic historian of our time now denounced me as a bitter fascist.

"I got a lot of flak, of course, but at that time I was all right. I had all the money I needed, and thought, 'Well, gee whiz, I've simply got to do this and as long as I last with this strip I've simply got to say it.' I couldn't do anything else; I really couldn't. So I did it. One of the side effects is that I saw the strip begin to lose—but I said, the hell with it."

In retrospect, did Capp think commentary has a place in comics?

"Comic art not only should say something about the status quo: it must. The message is in the art that is brought to any medium. A work of art is a work of art regardless of form, size, or material. People have been brainwashed: If it's in a comic strip, in a daily newspaper, and done with pen and ink, it's supposed to be a contemptible trifle. That's self-swindling snobbishness."

In the realm of traditional "art," I recalled that Capp had had a grand showing of pop-art type Abner paintings in New York a few seasons earlier. Did modern currents in art appeal to him?

"Modern art is the revelation of disordered minds. It is created by the untalented, sold by the unscrupulous, and bought by the uninformed. Genuine art today is found only in auto ads, fashion drawings, and comic strips. And comic strips are the best art being produced in America today. I judge them by the same standards I apply to Daumier and Michaelangelo. And by those standards comic strip art is damn good."

Abner's fame grew (Capp switched syndicates for more control and higher profits in 1964) with the classic stories and characters that sprang from Capp's mind: The Shmoos, limitless providers of the needs of mankind; the Kigmies, classic emotional outlets ("Little creatures with targets on their asses," Capp described); the Bald Iggle, a look into whose eyes made the gazer unable to lie. All these characters represented threats to order and exploitation and were therefore doomed. Also in the parade are Fearless Fosdick, Marryin' Sam, Moonbeam McSwine, Abijah Gooch, Hairless Joe, Lonesome Polecat, and a cast of thousands after the Yokums themselves.

What made *Li'l Abner* a comedy and not a humorous tragedy—thematics aside—was Capp's method of characterization. Unlike John Bunyan, who used representation (Harold Gray was his closet student in the comics), Capp used personification. His characters were virtues and vices incarnate—and better yet, they reveled in such states. Not one of the residents of Dogpatch ever felt an ounce of remorse for the rottenness, greed, lust or filth he or she possessed.

Hence, *Li'l Abner* became more than a morality play. It was a vast, 43-year panorama of the worst and misguided best in all types of our fellow men and—*shudder!*—ourselves. Mammy represented the American matriarch to the *n*th degree, and Gen. Bullmoose, the quintessential finance capitalist, had more avarice in his pinkie than two generations of *Orphan Annie* critics have found in all of Daddy Warbucks.

In the end, it might have been the very over-politicization of everything in our culture that did *Li'l Abner* in—in spite of the fact that Capp's fusillades were aimed directly at this new state of affairs. For he was forced to deal with his new targets in a sense on their home turf: everywhere. In the past, politics was a small portion of what he attacked. Now that politics pervaded the culture, it just about followed that the strip began to run on one track. Oh, Capp still aimed at things like the oil crisis and TV mindlessness—and Fosdick was always there—but friends and enemies alike began expect politics in every strip at every

turn.

In the readers' minds it became an obsession even greater than the Eternal Question of whether Abner and Daisy Mae would marry. It was a trap impossible to escape. Walt Kelly occupied the last few years of *Pogo* with a heavy dose of politics and he, too, felt the compulsion to be ever more strident. The result in his case was a sorry imitation of his own brilliant political satires of the '50s.

If you want the reduced argument, Capp was the ultimate antiestablishmentarian. In the '60s he merely recognized that there was a new Establishment, as entrenched and influential as any in our history: the internationalist senators, an elitist and hypocritical judiciary and bureaucracy, biased media, the Social-Industrial complex, and the campus bed-wetters who, for reasons partly commercial and mostly inexplicable, were deified by this new Establishment. Capp never changed his role; the targets merely replaced each other between acts.

Perhaps the most famous of the new targets, after Ted Kennedy who appeared occasionally as a smug plutocrat, was Joanie Phoanie, a character many readers saw as a parody of Joan Baez. "I really based her on a type, not an individual," Capp insisted. "Although I had Joan herself to deal with in speeches as the greatest wartime singer since Tokyo Rose.

"As a target, she was to me like Joe McCarthy. They both lied to us, but both based their crusades on a grain of truth. In the '50s there was indeed a Communist menace, but McCarthy went too far. And we did have poor people in America when she was singing about them—but no country has ever done more than ours in trying to pull people out of poverty."

Joanie was an idol of S.W.I.N.E., Students Wildly Indignant about Nearly Everything—Capp's acronymic portrait of the "new KKK—they only changed their initials." His epithets were widely quoted alike by campus foes and those who found him a New Right hero, from the deliberately malaproped "Women's Lip" to Capp's definition of the real martyrs at Kent State—the young men of the National Guard.

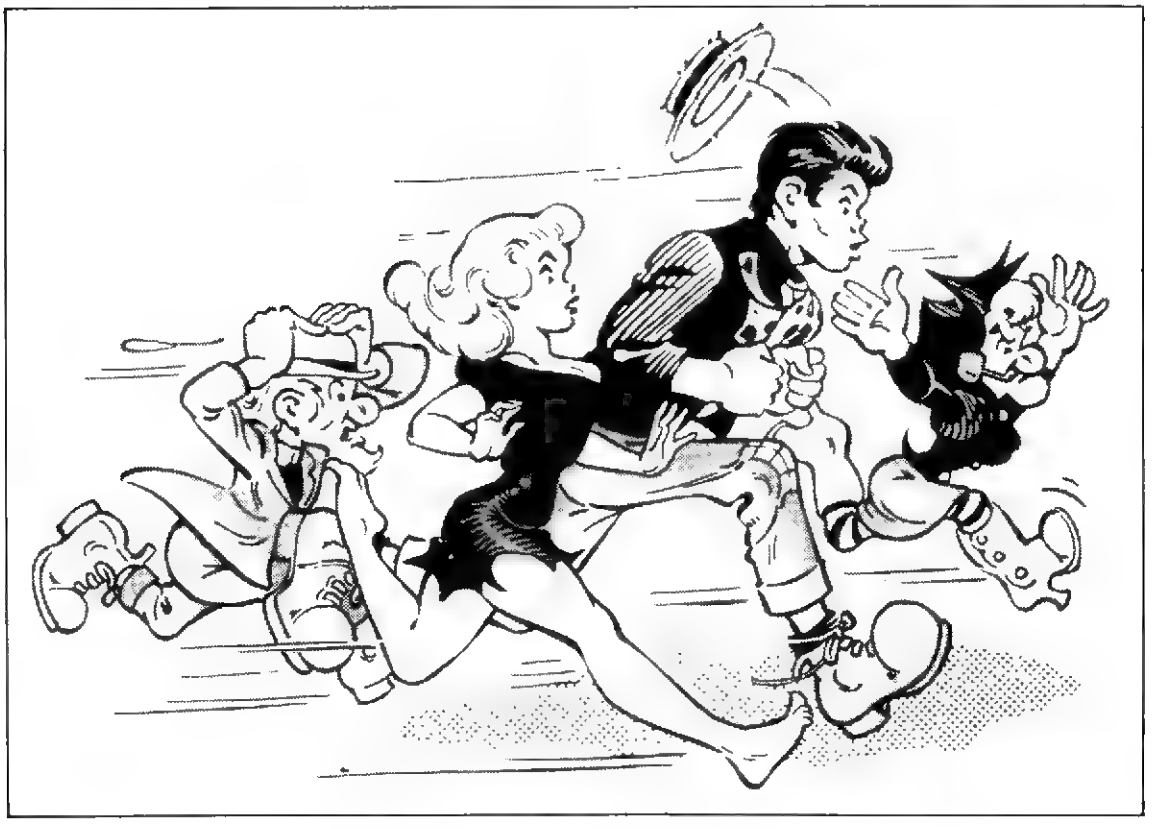
That John Steinbeck (who has traveled many of the ideological roads of Capp, from the '30s through Vietnam, to the '70s) called Capp "our greatest satirist since Sterne" and that Capp deserved the Pulitzer Prize years before Garry Trudeau was born are true. Much has been made of his satire, but not as much of his art. Partly this is just, because, even by his own admission, the strip was a production line with very little of the art his. But he was a talented artist and a very conscious one: in the early years of the strip, afraid of infant mortality in his field, he devised a method of coping. The dramatic angles, the free use of blacks, the neon-like lettering and onomatopoeia—all were utilized to draw attention to a strip that might otherwise have been lost in a sea of others on the comics page.

What remains for future critics to compliment in Capp is an area that has been little explored—his logical place in the succession of American literary humorists: the local colorists and dialect writers. No matter that he was a Jew from the Northeast and that Dogpatch hardly even approximated a real part of the Ozarks or anywhere else; Capp's milieu and methods put him squarely and prominently in the tradition of Sut Lovingood, Artemus Ward, Petroleum V. Nasby, Mark Twain, Kin Hubbard, Ring Lardner, and, after Capp himself, Walt Kelly. Capp represents a type of literary humor as purely American as—the comic strip.

The world still has a long way to go to recognize the genius of Al Capp. He was a man who was—for most of his career—totally in command of his medium, a sagacious critic, a humorist of the first order. Other bright lights of cartooning have fulfilled their talents through strips—Mort Walker and Charles Schulz come to mind immediately—but Capp, while starting at the drawing board, transcended his creation.

Aside from the fact that he became a public personality, Capp made the strip merely a facet of himself rather than the reverse, which is so often the case with strips and their producers. Readers would *read* more than he *wrote*, and with justice, because the world of Capp—for all its freewheeling wildness—represented a structured view of life. From such a structure grew a wonderous web of implications, a system of phenomenology, ontology, and iconography, that made us feel privileged to be visitors to his mind. n

"Modern art is the revelation of disordered minds."



Capp, In His Own (Pow!) Words

"The Comic Page Is the Last

At a National Cartoonists Society forum in the 1950s, the illustrious speakers included Rube Goldberg and Herblock. To this shop talk Al Capp was invited to speak—and speak he did, on everything from unappreciative editors (in the audience were many newspaper feature editors) to caricature to libel law. Finally—almost incidentally—he beat his audience over their collective head with some positive points, temporarily setting aside acerbity and sarcasm. The speech is a remarkable glimpse into Capp's professional, public persona.

As a matter of fact, Rube is right. there are a dozen Al Capps, and I hope they're all working tonight. I've been asked by the younger cartoonists here where I get all the depraved and degraded faces I draw in *Li'l Abner* and the answer is I come now and then to these meetings and just look around. Nobody noticed here that we voted in the entire dinner menu from Lum Fong. [*A reference to the list of Japanese cartoonists voted into membership earlier.*] But the prices are right. I made some notes on the remarks preceding this and that is my speech. I'm sure our guests here have noticed that while editors have cleaned up comics, cartoonists are dirtier than ever. Rube did say something to you editors I cannot agree with; he said we approve of everything you do. Really, we don't approve of a goddamned thing you do except one thing—sending us money. Other than that we approve of nothing at all except also the dropping of strips like ours. I know that Milt Caniff was scheduled to speak in this room who does a comic strip with words in it. I don't know what Milt was going to say but let me say something about this reduction in size.

Comics have had a most interesting history. Editors reluctantly discovered that we had no function at all in newspapers except to sell them. Some years ago they decided that since a dozen comics got a lot of readership, two dozen comics would get a lot more. So they began to print two dozen comic strips in the space hitherto occupied by a dozen comics. They did no harm at all to the original dozen except to make them totally unreadable. Polls began to show that people were not reading continuity strips (for only one reason; they couldn't!) and that pantomime strips, with no words at all, were getting enormously popular. Now many pantomime strips are great, but I submit to the editors that the reason pantomime strips are so much more easily read is that there ain't nothin' to read.

I've been criticized often for using real people in *Li'l Abner*. The truth is that whenever I plan to use a friend of mine in the strip, I usually write and ask him if I may. Generally he writes back and says I may, so I do it. Sometimes he writes back and tells me that I may not, so I do it. Actually I've had no real trouble except an occasion several years ago when I created a delicious dimpled piano player I called Loverboynik. Immediately after he appeared I got a letter from a lawyer with three names (they're always more expensive and much more irritable) in California who told me that he had a client who resembled Loverboynik. I thought that was a hell of a thing for him to say about a client, whose name was Liberace, whatever that may be. There have been several theories. He was going to sue me because Loverboynik looked like Liberace. Somehow, *Time* Magazine heard about this (possibly because I tipped them off) and they asked me what my defense would be. I told them that there was no resemblance between Loverboynik and Liberace because Loverboynik could play the piano rather decently and rarely wore black lace underwear.

I think the most luxurious trouble a strip ever got into was some years ago when I read a book which along with all America I was enchanted with—*Gone With The Wind* by Margaret Mitchell. I think it was the most suspenseful thing ever written in our time. At every chapter end, you wondered would she be raped, or what's worse, wouldn't she be. It was a thriller—a sort of *Dick Tracy* without pictures. I loved *Gone With the Wind* and decided to send it flowers in my own way which was to disembowel it in a series of four Sunday pages.

Like all of you, I work five or six weeks ahead. The morning after the first of these burlesques appeared, my phone in Boston rang—I live in Boston for reasons only Dan O'Brien and I know—and the operator told me I was being

Rick Marschall collection

Refuge of Classic Art"

called from Atlanta, Georgia, by a John Marsh. Does anybody here know that name? I didn't. I didn't know that Mr. John Marsh was Miss Mitchell's husband and a libel lawyer without much to do at the time. He asked me, "Are you Al Capp, suh?" in a Southern drawl, and I told him yes that was my privilege. He said, "Suh"—I must tell you that he called me "Suh" throughout the conversation and at first I thought it a term of Southern respect. Later, I found out that it was an abbreviation for what he deeply felt about me—he said "Suh, my wife read your Sunday page, and suh, she didn't like it, suh."

Well, I was touched. To think that people in far Atlanta were so concerned about my career that they went to the expense of calling me when they felt I wasn't doing so well, and I said, "Gee, I'm sorry. Maybe she'll like it better next Sunday." (Then I really murder it!) He said, "No suh." I advised that she read *Rex Morgan, M.D.* until the whole thing blew over. As a matter of fact, *Rex Morgan* was having a most hilarious sequence then about leprosy; it didn't tell how to cure it but how to enjoy it.

But he kept nagging me and said that the only way I could please his wife was to cancel the entire series. I patiently tried to explain the facts of syndicate life; that they were irrevocably in the papers and no power on earth short of George Sokolsky (we all know that) could possibly stop the pages. But he kept nagging, and as I had to go back to work, I ended the conversation with a short Anglo-Saxon phrase of two words. It's very useful for getting rid of pests—and for beginning law suits.

About an hour later, United Features called me from New York to reveal for the first time that the gentleman to whom I had just spoken was Miss Mitchell's husband and that my closing remark had somehow irritated him and that he intended to sue United Features and me jointly for one dollar for every newspaper in which this burlesque had appeared. We had actually infringed on their copyright. I had used an arrangement of English words—Gone With The Wind—which then belonged to the Mitchells, as I've since always thought of them.

He was going to sue for one buck for every copy of every newspaper in which this infringement had appeared. Seventy-six million dollars! And in the opinion of the United Features lawyers, he had a damn good chance of collecting it. That didn't scare me although it is true that my half would have amounted to somewhat more than a year's pay. But I tell you this in confidence—United Features is very cheap about sums like $36,000,000.

This was some years ago when I was a hot-blooded kid cartoonist, and they employed a group of official Al Capp apologists who used to check every morning into the United Features office with tuxes, and ready to travel to any part of the country to apologize for me. They selected a specialist in soothing Southern authoresses who were having trouble with the menopause and sent him to Atlanta. He came back after three days and three days later when he had sobered up he told me he'd made a deal with Miss Mitchell. They would instantly cancel the lawsuit if in my next Sunday page I would publish an apology, and Miss Mitchell was *good* enough to write the apology for me. It was longer than *Gone With The Wind* but it didn't have the suspense—you knew who the son-of-a-bitch was from the opening sentence. It said that I was sorry and that I wished I was dead, and that *Gone With The Wind* was the greatest of English prose and *Li'l Abner* was the worst, and I wished I was dead, and I'm sorry, and it went on and on and would have taken the entire Catskill Mountain Resort Section of the *New York Post* to publish it. So I cut it down to its essentials and said I was sorry and published the apology in the next Sunday page and that cancelled the lawsuit.

However, I reserved three panels after that in which some of my most loathsome characters like Hairless Joe and Lonesome Polecat discuss Southern authoresses and libel lawyers as a group and how unnecessary they were. Somehow, I managed to take all the graciousness out of it. The following Monday morning, *Time* called me and asked what was behind the Mitchell-Capp feud. I told it in as unprejudiced and uncolored a way as I told it this evening; they published the story as I told it, and the last I heard, the Mitchells were suing the Luces.

It's really a rare opportunity for a cartoonist to have some captive editors to beef to, but I haven't anything to complain about except that they have made me comfortable, rich, and overweight. I do resent that. However, I ask them on behalf of a lot of other cartoonists to have some sort of mild pride in them. It's a curious thing about being a cartoonist; writers won't admit you're a writer because you can draw and artists won't admit you're an artist because you can write, so nobody knows what you are except everybody in the world who reads you. I think parents should be told that they can find the best in American classic art in the comic pages of any newspaper. The comic page is the last refuge of classic art. The galleries are full of diseased and depraved guys who vomit on canvas; magazines no longer use illustrators; they use photographs of boys and girls and it's hard to tell which is which unless the girls have moustaches. There are no more great assignments for fine artists from the church such as there were in the Renaissance and there are no more assignments from the royal courts as there were in the days of the great portraitists. The fine artist goes as he has always gone, as a man who must provide for his family. He must go to where the money is best. The money is best in the comics, and the comic page, whether the editors and publishers know it or not, contains the best in American art. **n**

Li'l Abner Meets The Bald Iggle

The Who's Zoo of Al Capp

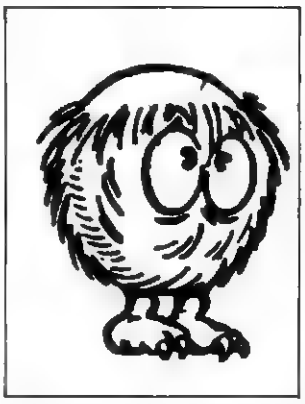
What a bestiary Al Capp created during the run of *Li'l Abner*!

His most famous creations were the Shmoos and Kigmies. Each creature's name derived from a pun-oriented function: Yiddish folk will *schmooze* when they meet, mix, share and talk warmly, and the Shmoos were Capp's engaging and accommodating animals who could transform themselves into steaks, cocktails, and anything else one's heart desired; the Kigmies wore targets on their posterior portions, inviting, as it were, frustrated citizens to "kick me" and thereby channel anger and hostility away from society and innocent folk.

Both served purposes in this world (or Capp's, anyway) that were clearly beneficial to mankind, that made daily life for everyone else a bit more tolerable. Understandably, those who didn't even come in contact with a Shmoo or Kigmie would benefit from their presence on the landscape.

Not so the Bald Iggle. Here was a creature who had magical powers, more magical than the Shmoos' talents for transformation. You see, when you looked into the languid, large, soft, sad eyes of the cuddly Iggle you had to tell the truth. He was like a living vial of truth serum, a non-mechanical lie-detector test. When he gets around, everyone in the world would begin being honest, truthful, and straightforward. A boon to mankind, a prefiguration of heaven on earth. Right?

Capp is still one step ahead of us. Having created the irresistible device of such a character's properties, Capp immediately foresaw the revolutionary and subversive threats the Bald Iggle posed. Naturally a world composed of politicians, advertising men, used-car salesmen, and military budgeteers would see the Bald Iggle as a menace greater than the nuclear bomb, AIDS, and *Welcome Back, Kotter* reruns all rolled into one.



There is no episode in the entire run of *Li'l Abner* that revealed Al Capp as a peer of Swift more than this Bald Iggle sequence. It is structurally brilliant, with an inspired establishing premise and a sardonic *denouement*. There is rich characterization, and if there is a major thrust of its satire, there are dazzling parries along the way—at British traditions and American hillbillies, at bureaucrats and all manifestations of human nature.

It is in Capp's treatment of human nature that we realize that he has not really created a zoo of bizarre comic-strip animals. What he has merely done ("Merely": actually no one in comics ever did it better, nor hardly anyone in all of the arts) is give shape and form to the most basic of our human emotions. It may be a hope, or a gratification, or a transference, or a lust. Sometimes it is even a fear.

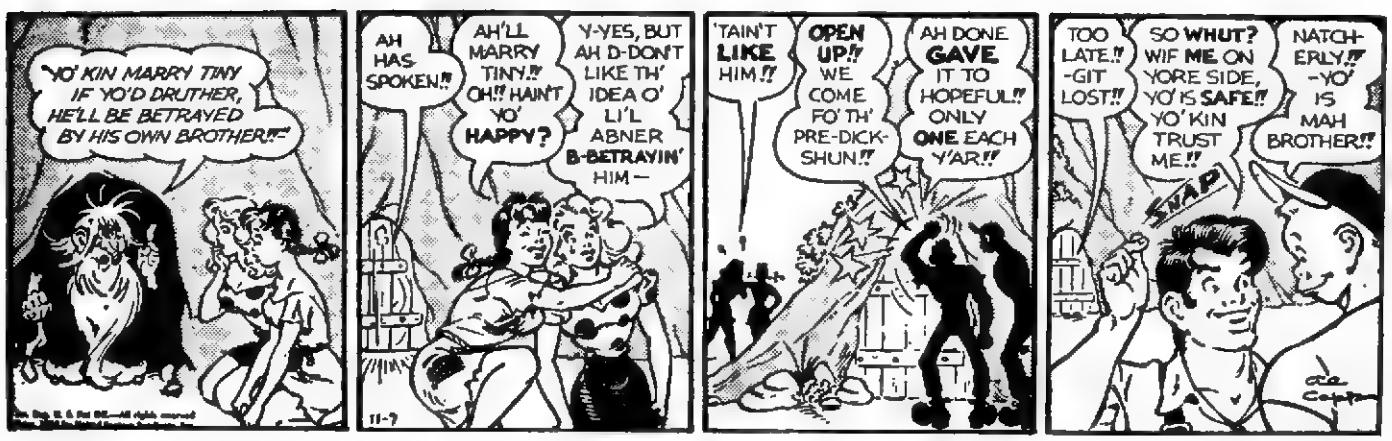
But always the creatures, bizarre as they looked and humorously as they were named, were brilliant, often brutal, personifications of various recesses of our own souls. And so were the reactions that met the creatures in Capp's world. —*REM*

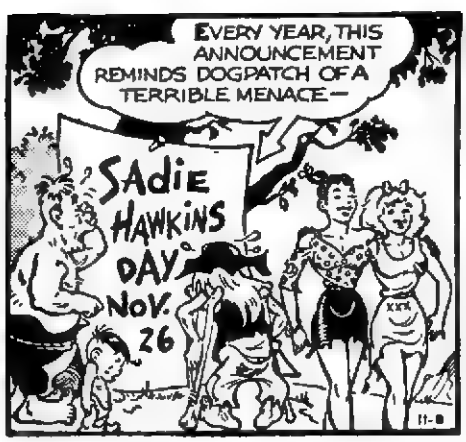
HOLD IT, BABY BROTHER!!
TH' BASEBALL SEASON IS OVER. YO' GOTTA GIT READY FO' TRACK!!
BUT, AH IS ONLY 15½ YARS OLD!! AH DON'T WANTA GIT MARRIED!!
SADIE HAWKINS DAY NOV. 26
NATCHERLY. NO BOY IN DOGPATCH EVER DOES!! THASS WHY SADIE HAWKINS DAY BIN INVENTED!!
TH-THEY IS ALL PRACTICIN' HOW T' KETCH ME!!— OH, SAVE ME, BIG BROTHER!!
Al Capp

WHUFFO' IS YO' SOBBIN', HOPEFUL?
BECUZ AH IS SO HOPELESS!! AH'LL NEVAH KETCH TINY IN TH' SADIE HAWKINS DAY RACE!!
WHY NOT? YO' GOT AS GOOD A CHANCE AS ANY OTHER MARRIAGE-CRAZED GAL!!-
HE'S -SOB!!- GONNA BE COACHED BY LI'L ABNER— AN' HE'S -SOB!!- A EXPERT!!-
WAL, AH'LL COACH YO'!!— AH IS EVEN MORE OF A EXPERT!! AH CAUGHT LI'L ABNER!!
Al Capp

AH DON'T WANTA GIT MARRIED!!"-AH IS ONLY 15½ YARS OLD!!
GREGGS!"-AH RAN IN SADIE HAWKINS DAY RACES, SINCE AH WERE 6½ Y'ARS OLD-
-AN LOOKIT ME!!
GULP!"-AH KEEPS PO'GITTIN'!!"- WAL-LET ME BE A LESSON T' YO'!!"-

WIF ME COACHIN' YO' YO'LL NEVAH GIT CAUGHT!! AH IS A EXPERT!!
B-BUT, D-DAISY MAE'S COACHIN' HOPEFUL!!"- AN' SHE'S EVEN MORE OF A EXPERT!!"-SHE CAUGHT YO'!!
SADIE HAWKIN DAY NOV. 26TH
GULP!"- THASS RIGHT!!"- WE GOTTA MOVE FAST!!"- LE'S QUICKLY GIT OLE MAN MOSE'S ANNOOAL SADIE HAWKINS DAY PRE-DICK-SHUN!!
CHUCKLE!!"- THET SILLY DAISY MAE LEFT THESE PO'K CHOP PIES OUT!!" WE'LL EAT 'EM FUST-AN' THEN DASH UP T'OLE MAN MOSE'S!!
OLE MAN MOSE


"YO' KIN MARRY TINY IF YO'D DRUTHER, HE'LL BE BETRAYED BY HIS OWN BROTHER!!"-
AH HAS SPOKEN!!
AH'LL MARRY TINY!! OH!! HAINT YO' HAPPY?
Y-YES, BUT AH D-DON'T LIKE TH' IDEA O' LI'L ABNER B-BETRAYIN' HIM-
'TAIN'T LIKE HIM!!
OPEN UP!! WE COME FO' TH' PRE-DICK-SHUN!!
AH DONE GAVE IT TO HOPEFUL!! ONLY ONE EACH Y'AR!!
TOO LATE!! -GIT LOST!!
SO WHUT? WIF ME ON YORE SIDE, YO' IS SAFE!! YO' KIN TRUST ME!!
SWAP
NATCH-ERLY!! -YO' IS MAH BROTHER!!



-AND EVERY YEAR, **THIS** ANNOUNCEMENT REMINDS WASHINGTON OF ONE-

WATCH OUT AT ALL POINTS OF U.S. ENTRY!!

The Bald Iggle is the national emblem of Lowest Slobbovia.

It is a greater menace to civilization than the Creature From the Black Lagoon or the Monster With the Atom Brain!!

When you look into its big brown eyes, you **must** tell the truth!!

This, of course, makes it impossible to carry on any courtship, many businesses, and most political speeches.

Don't let it in!!-

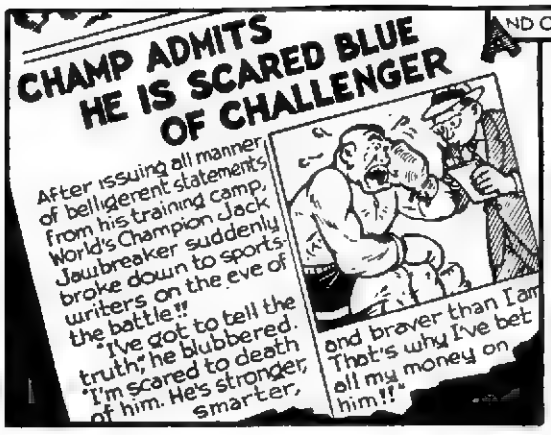
Remember — the life it ruins may be your own!!

WHAT'S TO HINSPECT, HINSPECTOR? I'M FROM SLOBBOVIA!! ALL I CARRYING IS ICE, NOTCHERLY!!
THOSE BALD IGGLES 'LL HIDE ANYWHERE, TO SNEAK INTO THE U S A.!!

CHUCKLE!!-THEY'RE SO BUSY LOOKING FOR BALD IGGLES, THEY DIDN'T NOTICE THESE DIAMONDS!!-
I'M SURE NONE GOT THROUGH!!
I'M NOT SO SURE!!
LOOK!!

OSCAR OSBONE LOSES $2,000,000 JOB!!
The nation's T.V. viewers were horrified last night when, in the middle of a beguiling tea commercial Oscar Osborne flung the teapot in the sponsors face, and shouted, "I've got to tell the truth!!—I prefer coffee!!"—
Sponsors took drastic action instantly.
and are suing once-popular

ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE STORIES!!
THERE SEEMS TO BE A WAVE OF INSANITY!!


CHAMP ADMITS HE IS SCARED BLUE OF CHALLENGER
After issuing all manner of belligerent statements from his training camp, World's Champion Jack Jawbreaker suddenly broke down to sports writers on the eve of the battle!!
"I've got to tell the truth," he blubbered. "I'm scared to death of him. He's stronger, smarter,
and braver than I am. That's why I've bet all my money on him!!

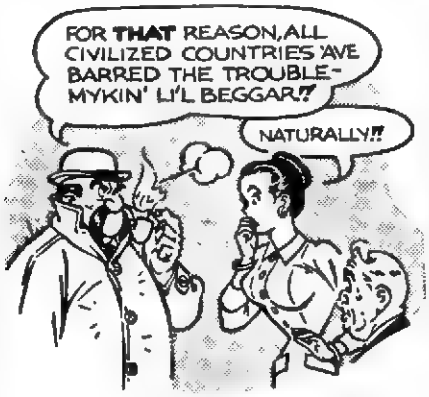
ND ON THE WEST COAST, THIS AMAZING INCIDENT OCCURS—
THAT TIP WAS A PHONY. THERE'S NO BURGLAR HERE!!
OH, YES, THERE IS, OFFICERS!! I'VE GOT TO TELL THE TROOT!!- TAKE ME!!-

WASHINGTON, D.C.—
IT'S CATASTROPHIC!! SUDDENLY, PEOPLE ARE TELLING THE TRUTH!!
BUSINESSES ARE SMASHING UP!!- ROMANCES ARE BEING WRECKED!!

BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES MAY BE FORCED TO CALL OFF THE WHOLE CAMPAIGN!!-
WHAT'S CAUSING IT?
H'IT'S THE BALD IGGLE!!

ONE IS LOOSE H'IN THE U.S.A.!!
A B-BALD IGGLE?- H-HERE?
IT'S BLUGSTONE OF SCOTLAND YARD!
Al Capp

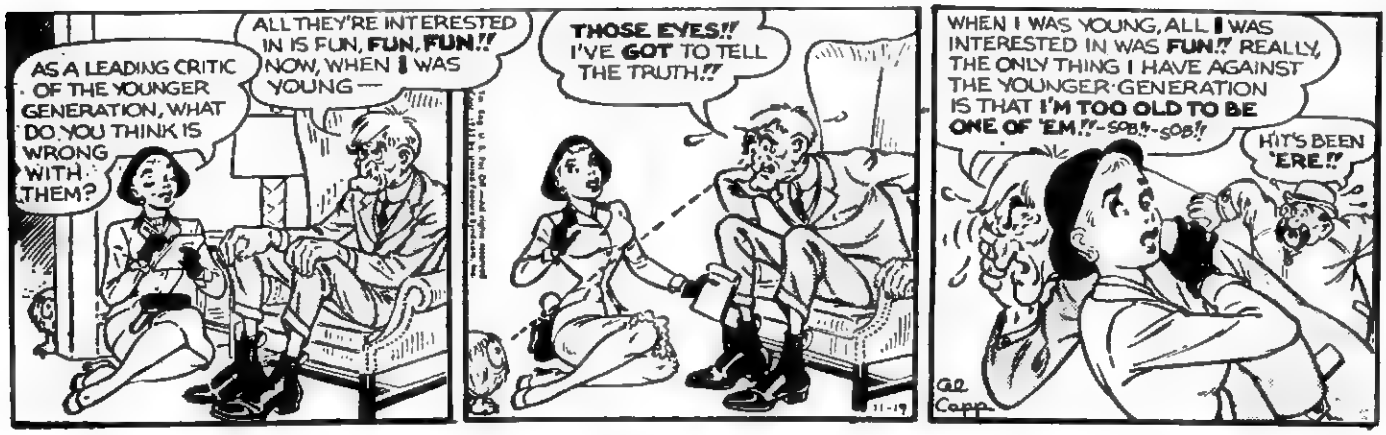
WHEN YOU LOOK INTO THE BALD IGGLE'S BIG BROWN EYES— YOU MUST TELL THE TRUTH!!


FOR THAT REASON, ALL CIVILIZED COUNTRIES 'AVE BARRED THE TROUBLE-MYKIN' LI'L BEGGAR!!
NATURALLY!!

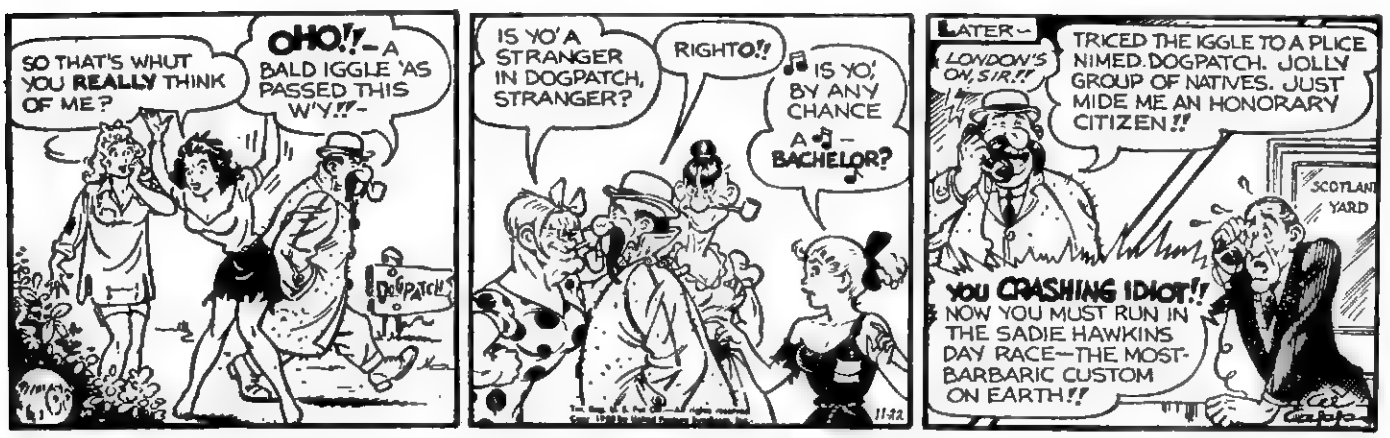
SOMETHING SLIPPED H'UP.—ONE GOT THROUGH!! THERE'S A BALD IGGLE AMONG YOU!!
AMONG US?
al Capp

A BALD IGGLE? YOU MUST RID US OF IT!!
HI'LL TRY!!
A WIRE, FROM DOG-PATCH!!
IN THE MIDDLE OF A CAMPAIGN SPEECH, SENATOR PHOGBOUND SUDDENLY TOLD THE TRUTH!! -HE WAS RIDDEN OUT OF TOWN ON A RAIL!!-
SO!!
NATURALLY!!
11-14
THE BALD IGGLE IS 'EADED SOUTH-AND SO AM I!!
G-GOOD LUCK, BLUGSTONE OF SCOTLAND YARD!!
Al Capp
BLUGSTONE HEADS SOUTH IN HIS PLUCKY LI'L BRITISH SPORTSCAR!!
TRACKING DOWN THE BALD IGGLE IS THE MOST DYNGEROUS H'ASSIGNMENT H'I'VE H'EVER 'ANDLED!!-
ONE THING I MUST SYE!!- H'EVERYTHING THAT DROPS OFF IS MYDE OF THE FINEST H'ENGLISH WORKMANSHIP!!
HOLD IT, BUSTER!!
11-15
CHUCKLE!!-THIS IS THE EASIEST STICK-UP I'VE EVER HANDLED!!
Al Capp
(-MUSTN'T RISK MY LIFE, TANGLING WITH THIS COMMON THUG!!-ME PRIME H'OBJECTIVE IS THE BALD IGGLE!!-)- 'ERE YOU ARE, LAD!!-10 POUNDS, TUPPENCE!! H'IT'S ALL I 'AVE!!-
??-(-"THOSE BIG BROWN EYES!!-THEY MYKE ME HASHYMED OF MESELF!!-
WAIT, LAD!!
THE GAS TANK'S FULL O' GOOD, SOLID, H'ENGLISH SHILLINGS!!
11-16
YOU'VE BEEN HONEST WIT' ME, BUSTER!!- HATES T'LEAVE YOU STUCK WIT'OUT GAS. HERE'S MY LIGHTER!! IT'S HALF FULL!!
SPLENDID!! IT'LL CARRY ME ANOTHER 50 MILES!!
WYTE TILL I GET ME 'ANDS ON YOU, YOU 'EARTLESS LITTLE BLIGHTER!!
Al Capp
THAT TROUBLE-MYKIN' BALD IGGLE'S SCOOTED INTO THIS 'APPY 'OME!!- 'E'LL RUIN IT!!- BLARST IT!!- CAN'T GET ME FOOT OUT OF THIS STOUT LITTLE H'ENGLISH SPORTSCAR!!
11-17
NO TIME TO SPARE!!- I'LL 'AVE TO TYKE IT WITH ME!!-
CLUMP!!
CLUMP!!
Al Capp
SIR!!-I WISH TO MARRY YOUR LOVELY DAUGHTER, BECAUSE- ??-(-"THOSE BIG BROWN EYES!!- I CAN'T GO ON WITH THIS FARCE!!-)

YOU SAY YOU WISH TO MARRY MY LOVELY DAUGHTER?
(-"THOSE EYES!"-THEY PROBE INTO MY SOUL!!-) SIR!!- I REALLY DON'T WANT TO MARRY THAT WHALE, BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY I CAN GET AT YOUR MONEY!!
11-18
WHY!!-I---??-(-"THOSE EYES!" SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING TO HAPPEN!!"-I'M GOING TO TELL THE TRUTH!!")-WHY SACRIFICE YOURSELF, YOU YOUNG IDIOT!! HAVEN'T GOT A DIME!!
CACKLE! CACKLE!
YOU BEAST!!
YOU RASCAL!!
YOU FAKE!!
NO DOUBT H'ABOUT IT!!-A BALD'IGGLE 'AS PASSED THIS W'Y!!
Al Capp

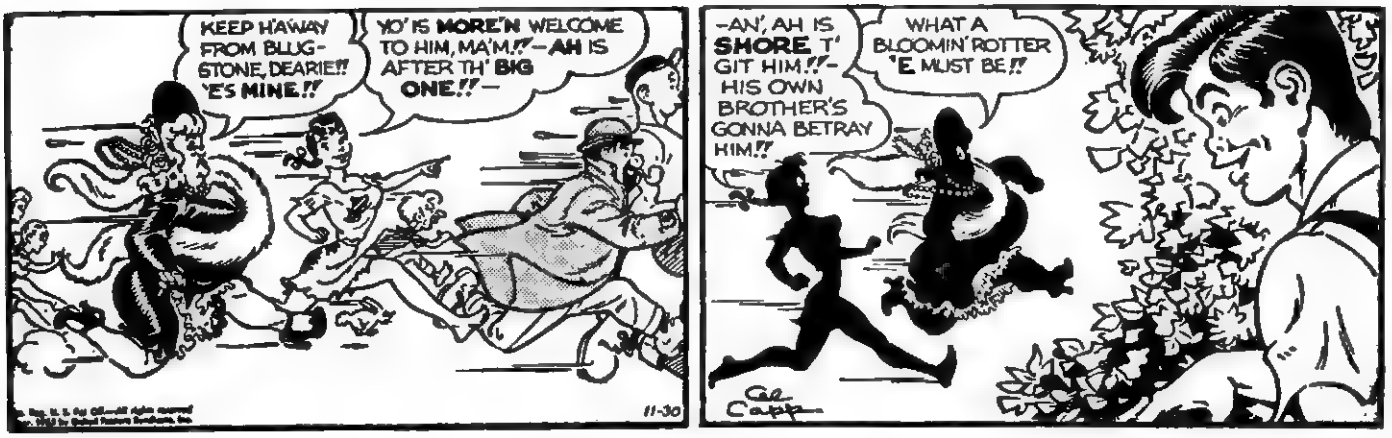

AS A LEADING CRITIC OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS WRONG WITH THEM?
ALL THEY'RE INTERESTED IN IS FUN, FUN, FUN!! NOW, WHEN I WAS YOUNG—
THOSE EYES!! I'VE GOT TO TELL THE TRUTH!!
11-19
WHEN I WAS YOUNG, ALL I WAS INTERESTED IN WAS FUN!! REALLY, THE ONLY THING I HAVE AGAINST THE YOUNGER GENERATION IS THAT I'M TOO OLD TO BE ONE OF 'EM!!-SOB!-SOB!
HIT'S BEEN 'ERE!!
Al Capp

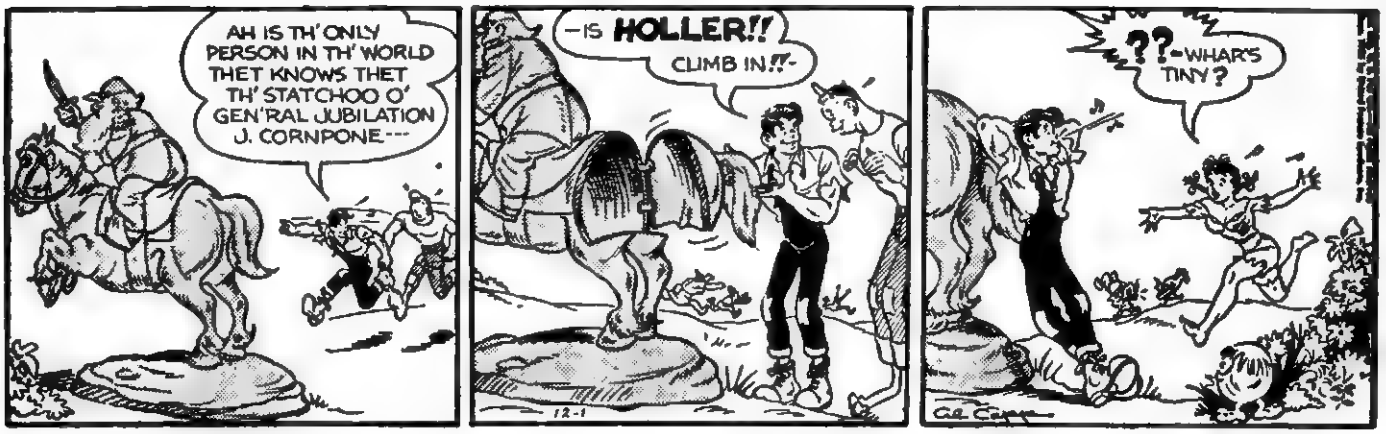
STOP—IN THE NIME OF 'ER MAJESTY!!
11-21
SNIFF! SNIFF
MY STOUT LITTLE H'ENGLISH SPORTS CAR!!
HONK! HONK!!
'E'S BURIED HIT SOMEWHERE—BUT WHERE?—I SHALL 'EAR HITS PITIFUL 'ONKS TO ME DYIN' DAY!!-SOB!-
Al Capp


SO THAT'S WHUT YOU REALLY THINK OF ME?
OHO!!-A BALD IGGLE 'AS PASSED THIS W'Y!!-
DOGPATCH
IS YO' A STRANGER IN DOGPATCH, STRANGER?
RIGHTO!!
IS YO' BY ANY CHANCE A♪- BACHELOR?
11-22
LATER—
LONDON'S OW, SIR!!
TRICED THE IGGLE TO A PLICE NIMED DOGPATCH. JOLLY GROUP OF NATIVES. JUST MIDE ME AN HONORARY CITIZEN!!
SCOTLAND YARD
YOU CRASHING IDIOT!! NOW YOU MUST RUN IN THE SADIE HAWKINS DAY RACE—THE MOST-BARBARIC CUSTOM ON EARTH!!
Al Capp

SCOTLAND YARD —
BLUGSTONE LET 'EM MAKE HIM AN HONORARY CITIZEN OF DOGPATCH!!— NOW, HE HAS TO RUN IN THE —SHUDDER!!— SADIE HAWKINS DAY RACE!!
EGAD, SIR! — ANY SPINSTER WHAT CATCHES 'IM, 'E'S GOT TO MARRY, IRREGARDLESS!!
?
'ATPIN 'ARRIET'S H'ESCAPED!!
IF I CAN MIKE IT TO DOGPATCH, U.S.A., AND GET MESELF MIDE AN HONORARY CITIZEN, TOO, I'LL NAB BLUGSTONE IN THE RICE —
—AND THEN — CHUCKLE — 'E CAN'T TESTIFY H'AGAINST ME!!
Al Capp
'UNTING FOR THAT BLARSTED BALD IGGLE MAY COST ME MORE THAN ME LIFE!!— IT MAY-BE!!— COST ME ME 'APPY BACHELOR'OOD!!—
SECURITY RISK BACHELORS
OLE MAN MOSE'S PREDICKSHUN WERE — "YO' KIN MARRY TINY IF YO'D DRUTHER — HE'LL BE BETRAYED BY HIS OWN BROTHER!!"
AN' IT ALLUS COMES TRUE!! OH IT'LL BE TH' HAPPIEST DAY O' MAH LIFE!!
AN' TH' MOST MIZZUBLE DAY O' MINE!! MAH LI'L ABNER BETRAYIN' HIS OWN BROTHER!!
Al Capp
THE SADIE HAWKINS EVE DANCE
OUCH!! YO' IS CRUSHIN' MAH FEET!!
NATCHERLY!! TOMORRY'S TH' RACE!!
'ATPIN 'ARRIET!! H'ENGLAND'S PUBLIC H'ENEMY NUMBER ONE!!— WHY, I'VE GOT H'ENOUGH ON YOU TO 'ANG YOU!!
NOT IF I CATCH YOU IN THE RICE, H'INSPECTOR BLUGSTONE!! CAN'T TESTIFY AGAINST ONE'S OWN LOVIN' WIFEY, Y'KNOW!! HAW!!
SOB!! (—HE LOOKS SO INNOCENT, AN' YET, TOMORRY HE'LL BETRAY HIS OWN BROTHER!!—)
Al Capp
SADIE HAWKINS DAY DAWNS, GRIM AND BLEAK, NATURALLY.
YO'ALL KNOWS TH' RULES. AT TH' FIRST SHOT, YO' FRIGHTENED RATS O' BACHELORS RUNS. AT TH' SECOND SHOT·····
···TH'·UGH!·— DOGPATCH BEAUTIES RUNS AFTER YO'. ANY UNFORTCH'NUT BACHELOR, DRUG BACK OVER TH' LINE BEFORE SUNDOWN, GOTTA MARRY UP WIF TH'— SHUDDER!— LOVELY YOUNG LADY WHUT DRUG HIM!!"
BANG!!
WAIT, GALS!!— HERE COMES A — SHUDDER!! — SPESHUL CONTESTANT!!
?
Al Capp

?-A SPECIAL CONTESTANT?-WHO KIN HE BE?-
WHO CARES?- ALL BACHELORS IS WELCOME!!
PRESENTIN' OUR GOOD NEIGHBOR--
BIG BARNS-FELL!!
TH' INSIDE MAN AT TH' SKONK WORKS!!
-AN', DUE TO HIS PROFESHUN, HE IS MIGHTY LONELY!!
NATCHERLY!!
AH IS TH' ONE BOY IN TH' RACE WHO'S ANKSHUSS T' GIT MARRIED!! SKONKS IS GOOD COMPANY — BUT A WIFE MIGHT BE NICER—
11-28
Cal Capp


KEEP H'AWAY FROM BLUG-STONE, DEARIE!! 'E'S MINE!!
YO' IS MORE'N WELCOME TO HIM, MA'M!!—AH IS AFTER TH' BIG ONE!!—
11-30
-AN', AH IS SHORE T' GIT HIM!!—HIS OWN BROTHER'S GONNA BETRAY HIM!!
WHAT A BLOOMIN' ROTTER 'E MUST BE!!
Cal Capp


AH IS TH' ONLY PERSON IN TH' WORLD THET KNOWS THET TH' STATCHOO O' GEN'RAL JUBILATION J. CORNPONE---
—IS HOLLER!!
CLIMB IN!!-
12-1
??-WHAR'S TINY?
Cal Capp

TINY!! TINY?
OH-SOB!!-DRAT HIS SHIFTY 15½-Y'AR-OLE HIDE—HE'S DISAPPEARED!!
D-DON'T ANYONE KNOW WHAR TINY IS?
??-THASS A CUTE LI'L ANIMAL!!
TURN ROUN', AN' LEMME SEE YORE EYES!!—
12-2

YO' GOT TH' SOFTEST, SWEETEST, SADDEST EYES!!-THEY PIERCES MAH SOUL!!-
OH, WHAR KIN TINY BE?
SOB!!-
THAR!!
12-3
BETRAYED, BY MAH OWN BROTHER!!
TH' PREE-DICK-SHUN COME TRUE!!
OH!!-WHUT HAS AH DONE?
Al Capp

HALP!!
AH IS ONLY 15½ Y'ARS OLD!!
OLD 'NUFF!!
YOU 'ORRIBLE BALD IGGLE!! YOU'VE RUINED ANOTHER LIFE!!
12-5
THIS'LL BE ONE O' TH' CHEAPER WEDDIN'S, NO DOUBT!!
OH, PAPPY!! G-GUESS WHO B-BETRAYED ME!!-
SOME INHOOMIN RAT!!-RIGHT?-
RIGHT!! -GOB!!- ME!!
(-AH'S HAPPY FO' HOPEFUL-BUT LI'L ABNEF A LOW SNEAK!. FUM NOW ON AH'LL HATE TH' MAN AH LOVES!!-)
Al Capp

YO' WANTS A $2.00 WEDDIN'?-BUT, THET'S 'TH' CHEAPSKATE'S SPESHUL!!'-FULL O' SLY INSULTS, AN' CONTEMPTUOUS REMARKS!!
IT IS?
12-6

BUT, EF YO' COULD MAKE IT TWO-FIFTY, YO'D GIT A POLITE CEREMONY—AN, AS A ADDED INDUCEMENT---
Al Capp

-AH'LL SMILE AT YO'—REVEALIN' MAH SOLID GOLD TOOTH!!-
WISH'T WE COULD AFFORD THET LUXURY!!

T-TWO DOLLAH'S IS ALL AH GOT!!-
IT'S HARDLY WORTH MARRYIN' SAM'S WHILE!!-SAY!!-AH GOT A INTRIGUIN' IDEE!!-
12-7

LE'S RESTRAIN OUR IM-PAY-SHUNCE, AN' SAVE OUR PENNIES, 'AN' WAIT TILL NEXT SADIE HAWKINS DAY-HUH?
Al Capp

-AN' THEN, MEBBE WE KIN HAVE A REAL HUMDINGER OF A WEDDIN'!!'-HUH?
OH, NO, YO' DON'T, MISTAH SLIPPERY!!-LE'S GIT TH' $2.00, OR "CHEAPSKATE'S SPECIAL" WEDDIN' OVER WIF, NOW!!

MAH BABY BOY'S GONNA BE MAR-RIED!!
AT-SOB!!-MERELY 15¼ YARS OF AGE!!
ALL ON ACCOUNT YORE OWN BROTHER BETRAYED YO'!!
SO AH DID!! CUSS MAH DOUBLE-CROSSIN' HIDE!!
C-COULDN'T YO'-ALL CRY AFTER TH' $2.00 WEDDIN'?-AH'M SKEERED SOMETHIN'LL HAPPEN T' PREVENT IT!!
NOTHIN' MUST PREVENT IT!! YO' NEEDS THET $2.00!!
WHO'S HE?
WHUT'S HE SO ANKSHUSS FO'?
WHUFFO' IS HE CARRYIN' A GUN?
12-8
Al Capp

THIS IS THE MOST 'ORRIBLE DILEMMA OF ME CAREER!!-IT'S ME DUTY TO CAPTURE THAT BALD IGGLE-BUT-IF I DO.---
YOU'LL LAND IN ME ARMS, HINSPECTOR!!
12-9

A LIFETIME WITH 'ATPIN 'ARRIET!!-WHAT A 'ORRID END!!-

BUT-SOB!!-DUTY COMES FIRST!!
Al Capp

WHY BOTHER AXIN' ME, EF AH TAKES HER FO' MAH LAWFUL WEDDED WIFE?-YO' KNOWS AS WELL AS AH DO-AH GOTTA!!
-AN' DOES YO' TAKE THIS BLUBBERIN' LOUT FO' YORE LAWFUL WEDDED HUSBIN?
YAS SUH!!
LOOK!!-BLUGSTONE OF SCOTLAND YARD BIN CAUGHT!!
BY HENGLAND'S PUBLIC HENEMY NUMBER ONE!!
12-10
Al Capp
WHO'S HE?

WHO'S HE?
-AND SO AH NOW PRONOUNCES YO'-MAN AN' WIFE!!
YO' DO?
12-12

TWO DOLLAHS, PLEASE!!
HE'S WORTH IT!!
STEP H'ASIDE, LADDIE-WE'RE NEXT!!
OH, YOU 'EARTLESS LITTLE SCOUNDREL!! YOU'VE WRECKED ALL OUR LIVES!!
SNAP!!
Al Capp

HAD T' PAY $2.00, T' MARRY UP WIF YO', TINY—
—AND EF EVER A GAL GOT HER MONEY'S WORTH—
HERE'S TH' $2.00!!
AN' HERE "IT" IS!!
WE'RE NEXT!!
FINIS LINE
I 'OPES YOU'RE 'APPY NOW, YOU BLARSTED BALD IGGLE!!
(—"THOSE EYES!!—THEY'S LOOKIN' AT ME WIF SECH LOVE!!—LIKE THEY WANTS ME T' DO RIGHT!!—")
HOPEFUL!!—STOP A-KISSIN' THET LOUT!!—YO' HAIN'T ENTITLED TO!!
Al Capp

AH-SOB!!—GOTTA TELL TH' TRUTH!!—MAH MARRYIN' LICENSE EXPIRED LAST NIGHT—
—AN' AH DIDN'T HAVE TH' TWO DOLLAHS, T' RENEW IT, TILL AH COLLECTED IT FUM HOPEFUL!!
THEN WE HAIN'T LEGALLY MARRIED?
NOPE—BUT NOW THET HE PAID FO' TH' LICENSE—HE KIN DO IT AGIN—LEGALLY!!
TOO LATE!! SUN'S GONE DOWN!!
SADIE HAWKINS DAY IS OVER!!
YOU SAVED ME LIFE, BALD IGGLE—BUT-SOB!!—MY ORDERS ARE TO HEXTERMINATE YOU!!—
Al Capp

??—WHUFFO' IS YO' GONNA KILL THET HARMLESS LI'L CRITTER?
HARMLESS?—THIS IS A BALD IGGLE.!!—IT FORCES PEOPLE TO TELL THE TRUTH!!
BUT, BLUGSTONE O' SCOTLAND YARD, SUH—SHORELY TH' WORLD KIN STAND A LI'L TRUTH.!!—
THE UNHAPPY TRUTH, MADAME, IS—THAT THE WORLD CAN'T!!
PLEASE, STEP ASIDE IT'S APT TO SPLATTER.!!—

QUICK!!—BEFO' HE REGAINS CONSHUSNUSS—TAKE THIS CRITTER, AN' SCOOT!!
YO' IS TH' ONE LI'L FAMBLY TH' TRUTH CAIN'T HURT!!
Al Capp

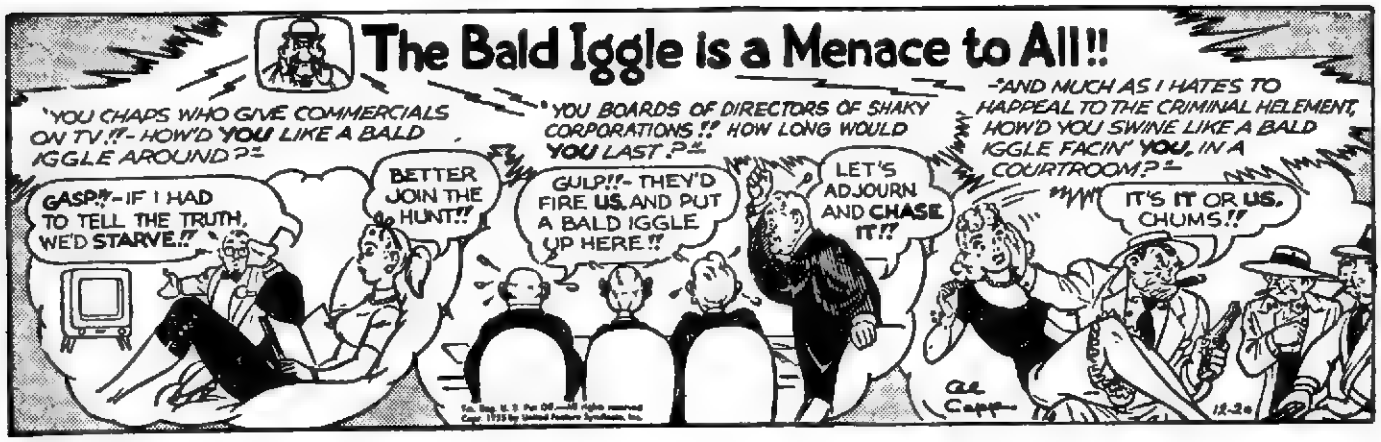
LI'L ABNER DONE TOOK TH' BALD IGGLE OUTA YORE MURDERIN' REACH!!
BUT, PROTECTING ONE OF THOSE CREATURES IS ILLEGAL!!

ILLEGAL!!-SHMILLEGAL!! AS LONG AS WHAT HE'S DOIN' IS RIGHT—THASS ALL AH CARES ABOUT!!
MADAME!!- YOU'VE SENTENCED YOUR CHILDREN TO A LIVING DEATH!!

"THEY'LL HUNT 'EM LIKE WILD HANIMALS," SAYS BLUGSTONE— "ON THE BEACHES, ON THE STREETS, IN THE HILLS ---"-
Al Capp

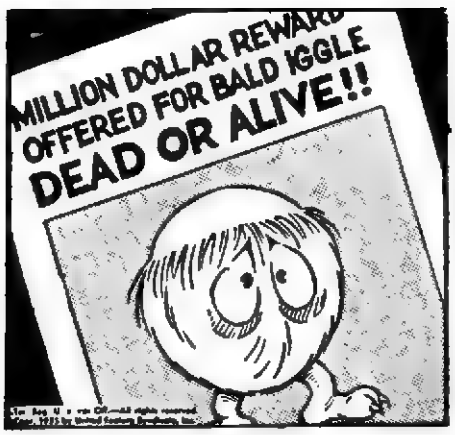
THE BALD IGGLE IS BEING HID BY H'ADMIRERS!! I NEED HELP!!
CLEAR THE NETWORKS!! BLUGSTONE SPEAKS TONIGHT!!

HE COULD BE NEAR YOU— FORCING YOU TO TELL THE TRUTH—
OR YOU— OR YOU— OR YOU!!
I'D NEVER BE ELECTED!!
I'D HAVE TO BREAK MY ENGAGEMENT!!
I'D BE FINISHED AS A SALESMAN!!
Al Capp


The Bald Iggle is a Menace to All!!
"YOU CHAPS WHO GIVE COMMERCIALS ON TV.!!- HOW'D YOU LIKE A BALD IGGLE AROUND?"
GASP!!- IF I HAD TO TELL THE TRUTH, WE'D STARVE!!
BETTER JOIN THE HUNT!!
"YOU BOARDS OF DIRECTORS OF SHAKY CORPORATIONS!! HOW LONG WOULD YOU LAST?"
GULP!!- THEY'D FIRE US AND PUT A BALD IGGLE UP HERE!!
LET'S ADJOURN AND CHASE IT!!
-"AND MUCH AS I HATES TO HAPPEAL TO THE CRIMINAL HELEMENT, HOW'D YOU SWINE LIKE A BALD IGGLE FACIN' YOU, IN A COURTROOM?"
IT'S IT OR US, CHUMS!!
Al Capp

THE SOUTHERN WOODS ARE SWARMING WITH GROUPS ESPECIALLY MENACED BY THE BALD IGGLE
THE COMBINED CALIFORNIA AND FLORIDA CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE COMMANDOS
THE UNITED TROUT FISHERMEN OF AMERICA
THE COLUMNISTS SUICIDE SQUAD
THE ONLY SAFE BALD IGGLE IS A DEAD ONE!
THE REAL ESTATE RANGERS
IT'S IT OR US!
THE POLITICIAN'S PATROL
Al Capp

IN LOWEST SLOBBOVIA—
ALL AMERICA IS IN TERROR OF THE BALD IGGLE!!
WHAT HOMM CAN THEY DO?
THEY MAKING YOU TAL THE TRUTH!! SO WHY NOT? WE DO!!
NOTCHERLY!! IN SLOBBOVIA CONDITIONS ARE SO ROTTEN, IS NO USE PRETENDING THEY AIN'T!!
IS DIS-GUSTINK TO SEE YOU.
WAS A AVERAGE ROTTEN DAY!! NOW IS A TOTAL LOSS!!
YOU GATTING OGGLIER, DIRR!!
YOU NO BOGGIN, NEITHER, DOLLINK— BUT WHAT CHOICE I GOT?
WANT TO RENT HOUSE? IS NOT FIT FOR PIGS!!
WHAT I CARE? I WON'T PAY RENT ANYHOW!!
RENTIN POCK KIPP OFF GRASS
Al Capp


MILLION DOLLAR REWARD OFFERED FOR BALD IGGLE
DEAD OR ALIVE!!

WHUT A COZY-LOOKIN' LI'L HOUSE!!
AH D-DON'T DAST AX ANY-BODY T'GIVE US SHELTER!! THEY'S OFFERIN' A MILLION DOLLAHS FO'US!!

SAY!!—THEY'S MAMMY AN' PAPPY'S OLDEST CHUMS!!—IT'S SAFE T'GO IN!!— FRIENDSHIP MEANS MORE'N MONEY, T'FOLKS LIKE THEM!!—
Mr. and Mrs. Sweetbody Goodpants
Al Capp

WHY, BLESS MAH GENTLE OLE SOUL!!—IT'S TH' YOUNG YOKUMS, AN' THAR TWO CHILLUN!!—
ONE OF 'EM HAIN'T EXACKLY A CHILE, MR. AN' MRS. SWEETBODY GOODPANTS—

IT'S A GULP!!— B-BALD IGGLE!!
ANY FRIEND O' YOUR'N IS A FRIEND O' OUR'N—

IT'S ONLY FAIR T' TELL YO' WE IS ALL BEIN' HUNTED LIKE W-WILD ANIMALS.
YO' IS AS SAFE HERE, AS IF YO' WERE IN YORE MAMMY'S ARMS.!!—
Al Capp

YO' IS TRUE FRIENDS, MR AN MRS. SWEETBODY GOODPANTS!!
FRIEND-SHIP IS SUMPTHIN' MONEY CAIN'T BUY, AH ALLUS SAYS!!
TSK!! TH' BABY WANTS MORE MILK!!

AH'LL STOMP OUT INTO THIS FEARFUL STORM, ON MAH CREAKY OLE LAIGS, AN' GIT SOME.!!
DON'T YO' THINK TH' BALD IGGLE IS CUTE?-

H-HE DIDN'T LOOK AT IT---
??-D-DON'T YO' THINK TH' BALD IGGLE'S CUTE?
Al Capp

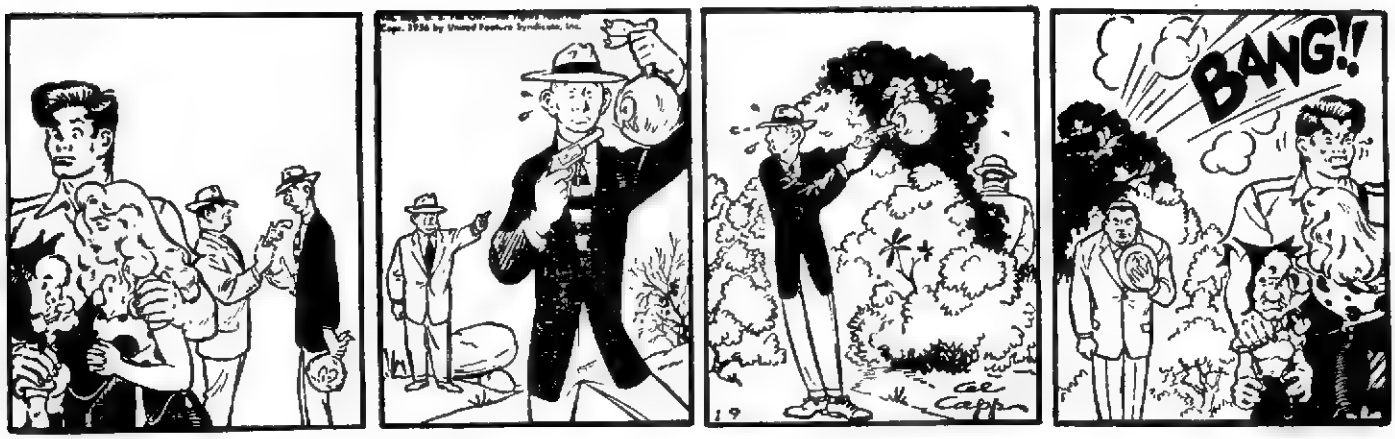
PLEASE LOOK AT TH' BALD IGGLE – IT'S HARMLESS!!
IT MERELY MAKES FOLKS TELL TH' TRUTH –
N-NOT NOW – L-LATER!!
TH' LI'L DARLIN' WANTS YO' T' LOOK AT IT – NOW!!
TAKE IT AWAY!!
OH-SOB!!-THEM EYES!!-GASP!-
RUN!!-MAH SHIFTY HUSBIN SNUCK OUT FO' TH' POLICE!!
WE CAIN'T STOP AN' REST, DAISY MAE!!- EVERYBODY'S HUNTIN' FO' US!!
CAIN'T UNNERSTAN' WHY FOLKS IS SCARED TO LOOK INTO TH' BALD IGGLE'S SAD, SWEET EYES – LIKE WE IS ALL DOIN'–
AH LOVES YO', LI'L ABNER-
AH LOVES YO', DAISY MAE–
AH LOVES PO'K CHOPS-
BALD IGGLE HUNT IN 10TH FRUITLESS DAY!
THESE WOODS ARE ENDLESS!!
IF ONLY WE COULD COMMUNICATE WITH THEM–
WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO PROJECT A GIANT IMAGE ON THOSE LOW-LYING CLOUDS?
HMM – VERY EXPENSIVE, BUT IT COULD BE DONE-
MADAME!!- WILL YOU GO ON, AND ASK THEM TO GIVE UP THE BALD IGGLE?
NOPE.
WE CAN PROJECT AN IMAGE OF YOU ON THOSE LOW-LYING CLOUDS –
WHEREVER THEY'RE HIDING, THEY'LL SEE AND HEAR YOU!!
WILL YOU STEP UP, AND ASK THEM TO TURN IN THE BALD IGGLE – FOR THE GOOD OF YOUR COUNTRY?
NOPE!!
AH FIGGERS TH' BALD IGGLE IS GOOD FO' MAH COUNTRY!!
A GRIM SPEECH!! BUT – SOON AFTER – THESE HEADLINES
MAMMY YOKUM TO GO ON HEAVENLY T.V. !!

MAMMY YOKUM GOES ON TO-NIGHT !!
Giant Image to be Projected on Low-Lying Clouds Over Southern Forest ....
DOGPATCH, Dec. 31— Scheduled for to-night is the world's biggest Spectacular --- aimed for the world's smallest audience.
BUT— YESTERDAY, SHE SAID NOPE!!
AND WHEN SHE SAYS NOPE!!
SHE MEANS NOPE!!
...What has Changed Her Mind?
HAVE YOU MEMORIZED YOUR LINES?
PUFFICKLY!!- LET 'ER RIP!!
CHILLUN!-LOOKIT ME!!
IT'S MAMMY'S VOICE!!
WHAR IS YO', MAMMY?
CHILLUN!!- AH WANTS YO' T' COME HOME, AN' GIVE UP TH' BALD IGGLE— SO THEY KIN KILL IT!!
IT'S MAMMY!!
BUT, MAMMY...
DON'T ARGY!!— IT GOTTA DIE!!-
B-BUT, MAMMY- YO' TOLE US T' SAVE TH' BALD IGGLE!!
YO' SAID A LI'L TRUTH CAIN'T DO TH' WORLD NO HARM!!
AH MUSTA BIN OUTA MAH FOOLISH OLE HAID T'SAY THET!!
SO-COME HOME WIF THET CRITTER— IT GOTTA DIE!!-
AH HAS SPOKEN!!-

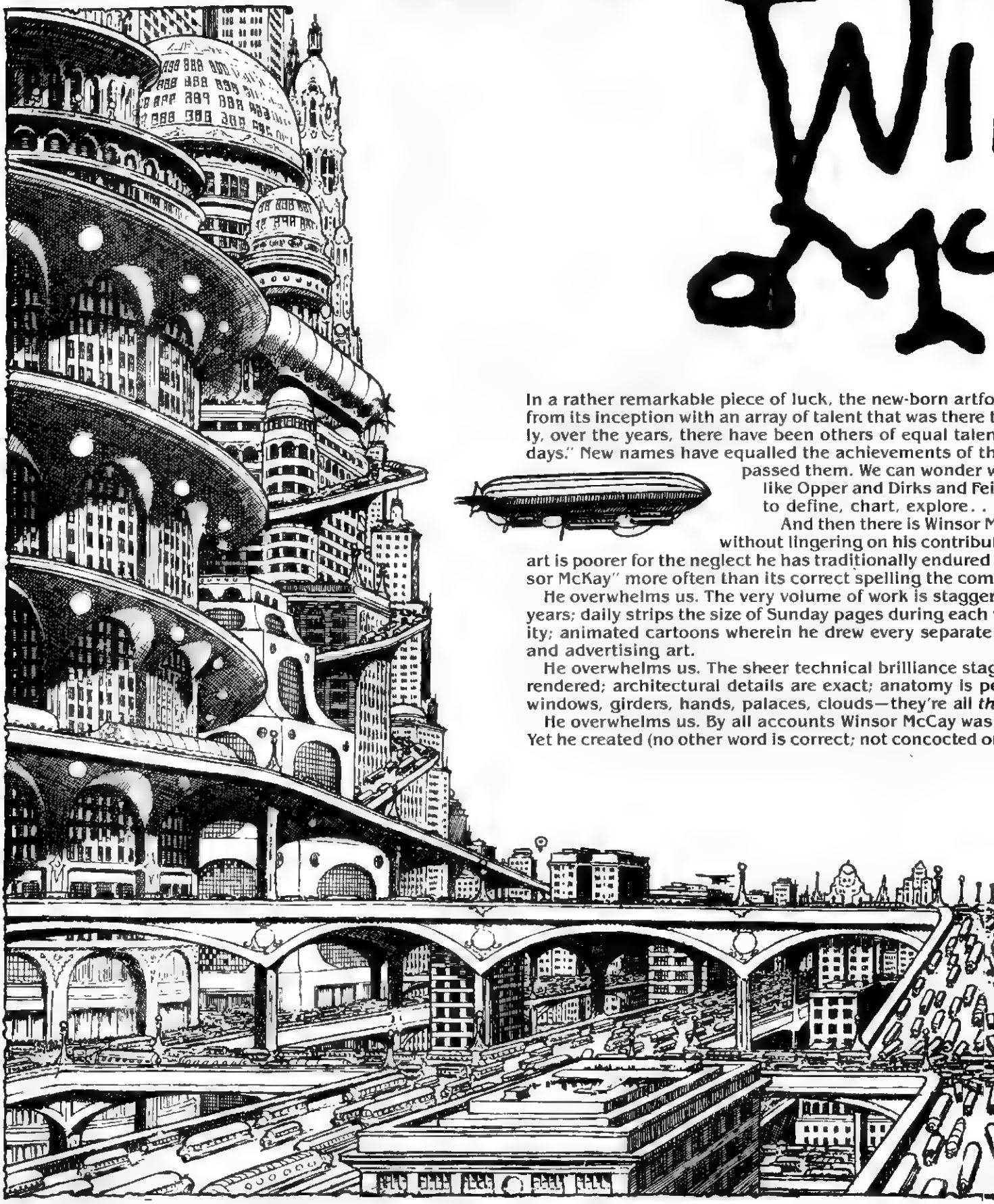
BRING TH' CUSSED LI'L CRITTER HOME, SO IT KIN BE KILT!!
Y-YAS'M. WHAT MAH SWEET, SCRAWNY OLE MAMMY TELLS ME TO DO, AH D-DOES!!
BACK NEAR THE YOKUM CABIN
HOW WAS I?
IT WAS YOUR GREATEST PERFORMANCE, HARVEY—
SHE DOESN'T KNOW I'VE ASKED HER KIDS TO COMMIT MURDER —IN HER NAME!!

BALD IGGLE!!—AH IS TAKIN' YO' HOME T' DIE, ON ACCOUNT MAH MAMMY TOLE ME TO —
SON!!-GO BACK!!- THIS PLACE IS CRAWLIN' WIF····
GOT IT!!
OH, MAMMY!!- ??-HOW COME YO' CHANGED YORE MIND?
WHAT IS YO' JABBERIN' 'BOUT?—NEVAH CHANGED MAH MIND IN ALL MAH LIFE!!-AH IS ALLUS RIGHT, TH' FUST TIME!!

YO' MEANS- THET VOICE WARN'T YO', MAMMY?-
DON'T FEEL HOO-MILIATED, SON!!- T'WERE A TRICK ANY IDIOT WOULD OF FELL FO'!!
Y-YOU MEAN- I-MUST···
YOU MUST!!-


BANG!!

Penmen Of The Past



Wi
amc

In a rather remarkable piece of luck, the new-born artfo
from its inception with an array of talent that was there t
ly, over the years, there have been others of equal talen
days." New names have equalled the achievements of th
passed them. We can wonder w
like Opper and Dirks and Fei
to define, chart, explore. . .
And then there is Winsor M
without lingering on his contribut
art is poorer for the neglect he has traditionally endured
sor McKay" more often than its correct spelling the com

He overwhelms us. The very volume of work is stagger
years; daily strips the size of Sunday pages during each
ity; animated cartoons wherein he drew every separate
and advertising art.

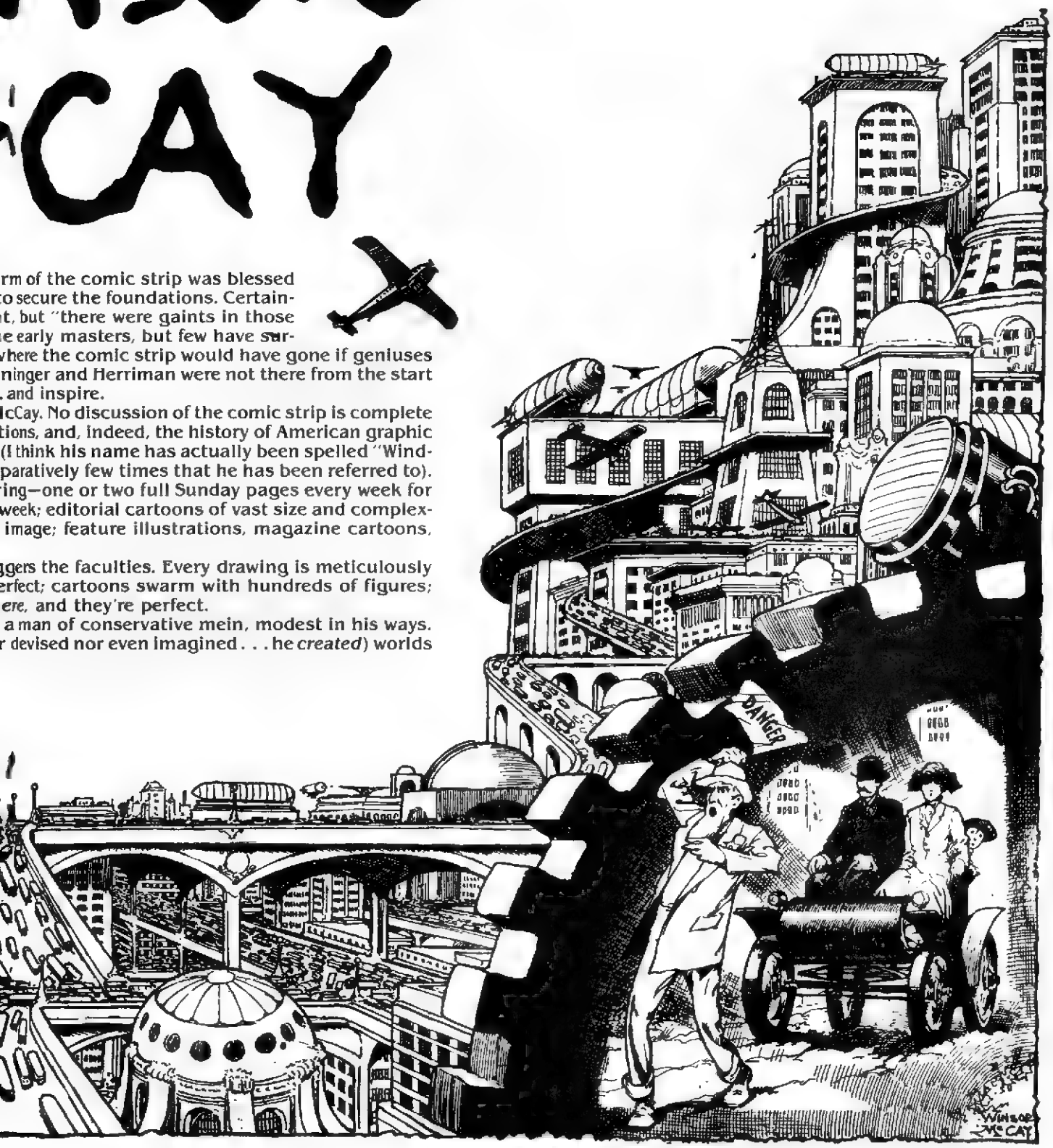
He overwhelms us. The sheer technical brilliance stag
rendered; architectural details are exact; anatomy is pe
windows, girders, hands, palaces, clouds—they're all *th*

He overwhelms us. By all accounts Winsor McCay was
Yet he created (no other word is correct; not concocted o

NSOR
'CAY

rm of the comic strip was blessed
o secure the foundations. Certain-
t, but "there were gaints in those
e early masters, but few have sur-
where the comic strip would have gone if geniuses
ninger and Herriman were not there from the start
. and inspire.
lcCay. No discussion of the comic strip is complete
tions, and, indeed, the history of American graphic
(I think his name has actually been spelled "Wind-
paratively few times that he has been referred to).
ring—one or two full Sunday pages every week for
week; editorial cartoons of vast size and complex-
image; feature illustrations, magazine cartoons,

ggers the faculties. Every drawing is meticulously
erfect; cartoons swarm with hundreds of figures;
ere, and they're perfect.
a man of conservative mein, modest in his ways.
r devised nor even imagined . . . he *created*) worlds



Above: McCay's criticism of American military involvement in the Philippines. The head on the sheet is that of native insurrectionist Emilo Aguinaldo.

of fantasy resplendent in their virtuosity. At once they are consistent and full of surprises; they can be dreamily enchanting but often are beset by troubles and menace. But they are always transporting us to planes beyond our imagination. McCay visited worlds that previously had been visited by Bosch, and by Blake, but by few others.

As a pioneer of the comic strip, Winsor McCay was there at the birth to establish fantasy as a dominant theme (it was to be a thematic preoccupation of many of his contemporaries). He was the first to fully utilize color and printing technology to full effect (no one to greater effect, partly because the technology ironically declined). And we, still standing agape in awe two generations later, are lucky for his timely contributions.

But McCay's accomplishments seem as limitless as some of his amazing panoramas: did he, like Alexander, ever weep that he had no more worlds to conquer? What a magic bottle of ink he must have had! For we can see in his black-and-white work—usually the dull, drab, weak sister and poor relation of Sunday supplements and color illustrations—the same breathtaking attributes as in the pyrotechnic displays.

McCay's brilliant application of boundless tones, shades, textures, and shadows made his pen-and-ink cartoons sing despite their lack of color. Those vistas he drew—you wonder if McCay somehow stood with Archimedes and his fulcrum—get you lost in the artwork. And the audacity of conceptualization is forever refreshing. The cartoons that McCay produced by routine, day after day, year after year, most artists would be proud to draw even occasionally.

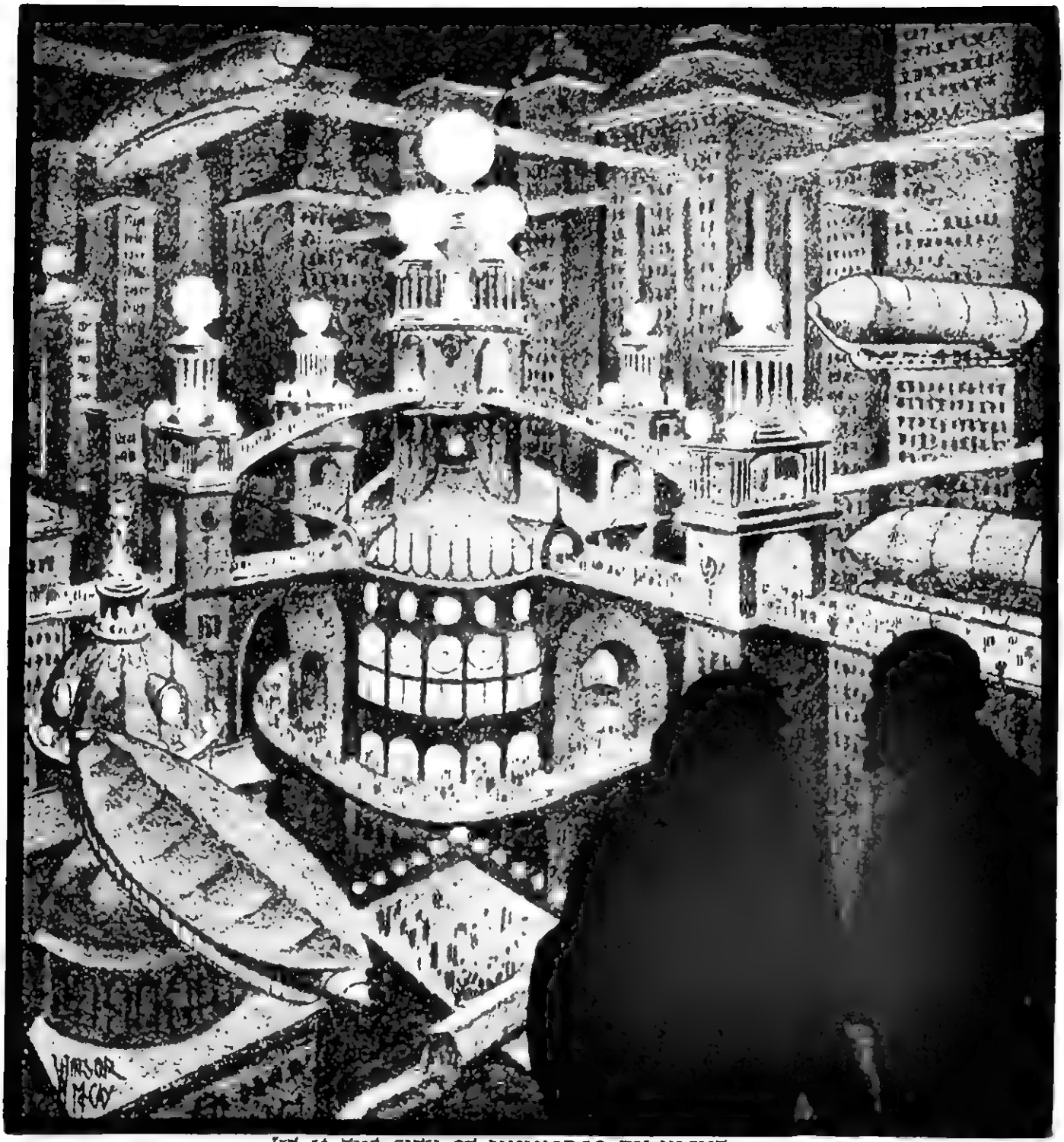
It is that black-and-white penwork we present herewith. McCay (1871-1934) has been profiled in his own words, via re-discovered writing, in NEMO #3. And he will be examined further—with huge, lavish reprints of classic penwork—in Fantagraphics Books' forthcoming *The Art of Winsor McCay*, edited by this writer.

This portfolio includes artwork from the many corners of Winsor McCay's fascinating career: anti-war cartoons for *Life* magazine (1899); early dream sequences (from the *New York Evening Telegram*); futuristic illustrations (from series in the *New York Herald*); and allegorical and editorial cartoons from the Hearst papers between the early 'teens and early '30s. The larger-format *Art of Winsor McCay* will present the best of McCay's Sunday pages (*Little Nemo, Sammy Sneeze, Hungry Henrietta*), but these pages too can only suggest the grandeur that was McCay's, whether he worked in black and white or color, whether his subject was daydreams or politics.

His grandeur is happily our inheritance. Winsor McCay documented his dreams, fantasies, and realities through tens of millions of pen strokes through his career. He wore his cartoonist's smock as proudly—and as honorably—as the Poet wears his laurel wreath. But McCay was *both*, after all; and many other things, too, including tour-guide. Let's travel.

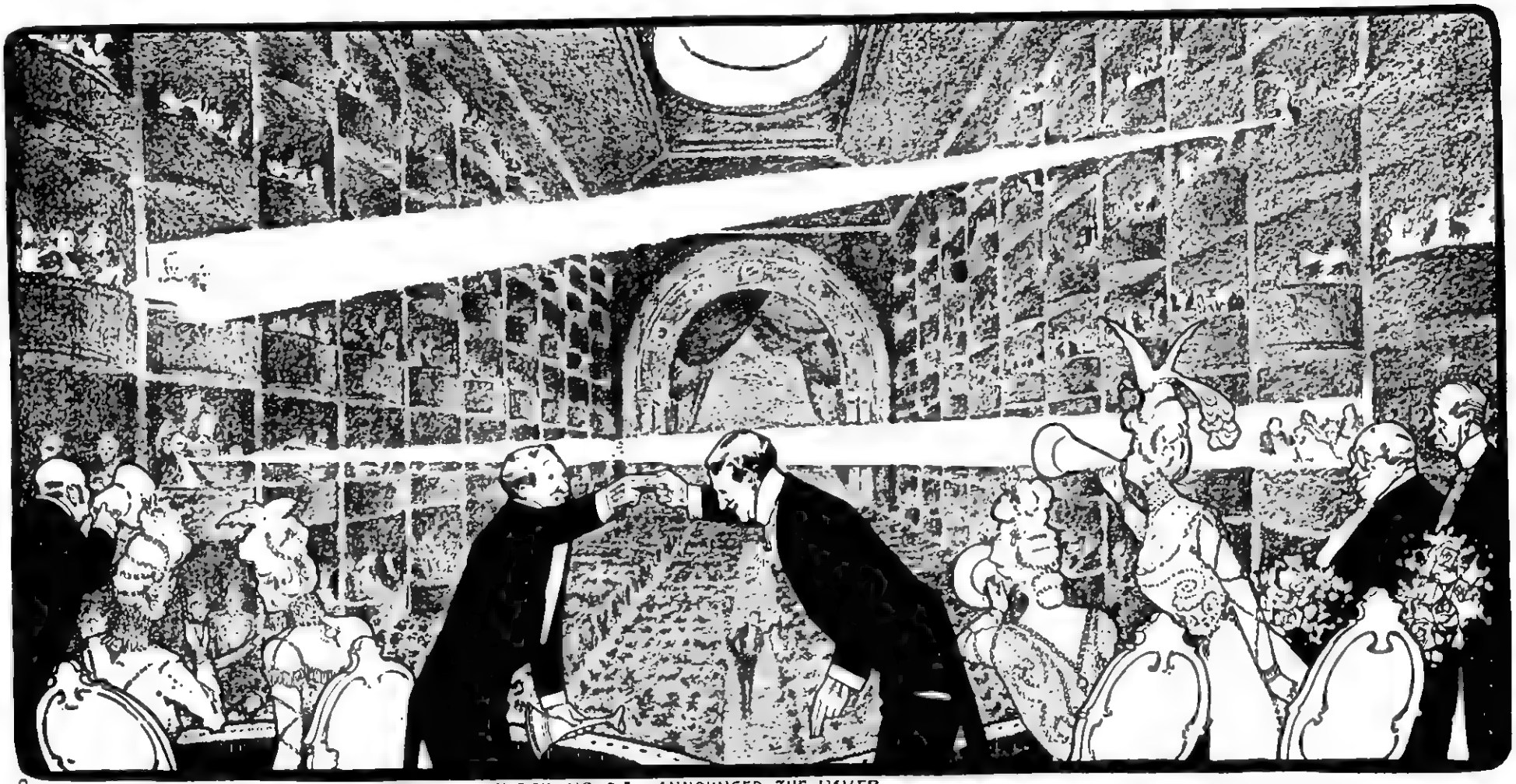
—RICK MARSCHALL

All artwork in this article is from collection of Rick Marschall



"IT IS THE CITY OF PHILYORGO BY NIGHT—

THE OPERA OF THE FUTURE



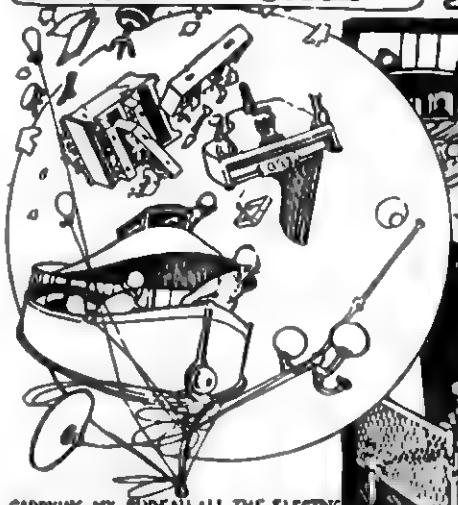
"KEEP YOUR EYES ON BOX NO. 9," ANNOUNCED THE USHER

comics library

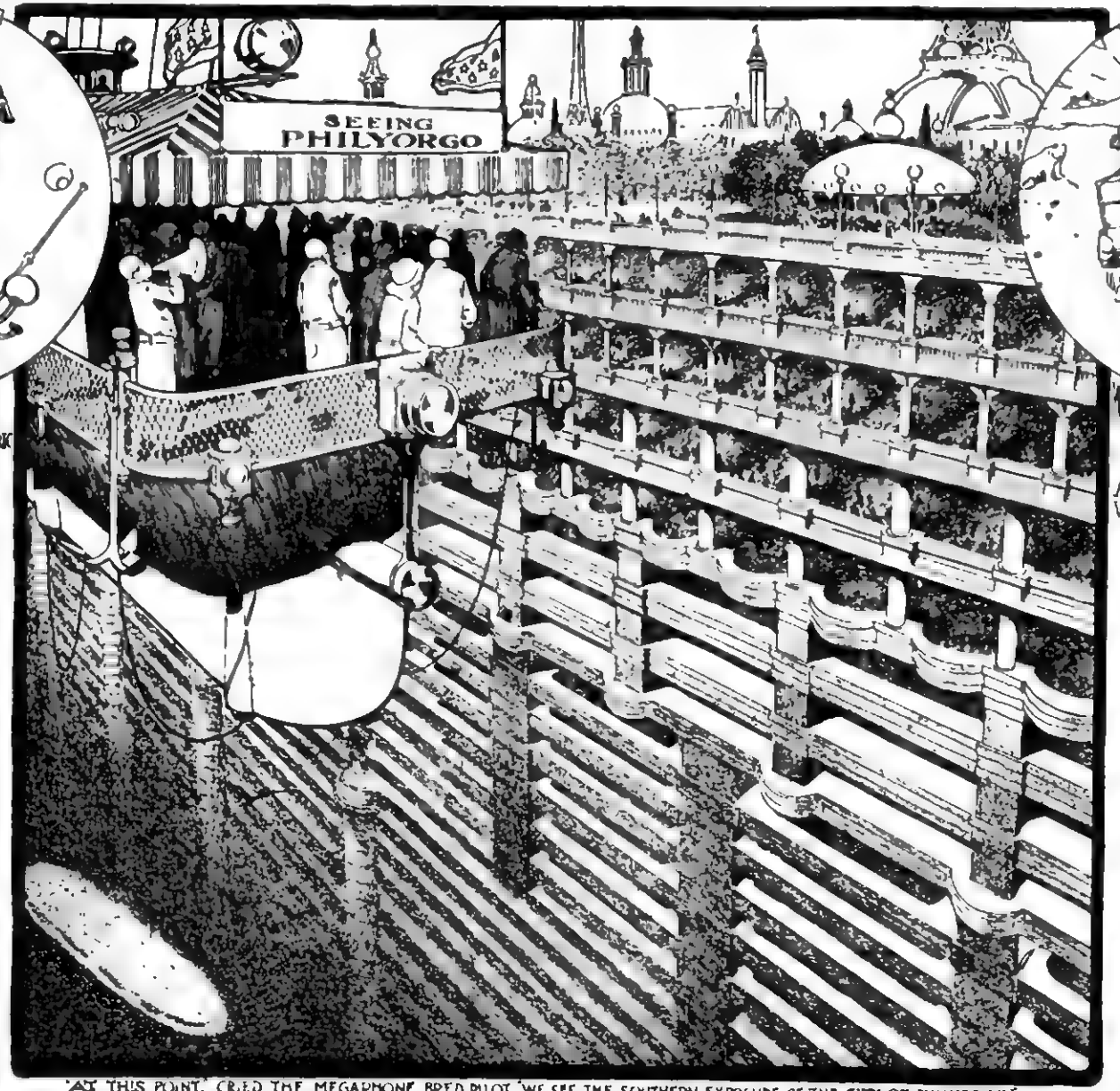
BEING SOME CONSIDERATION OF THINGS IN THE DAYS TO COME

The Spectrophone

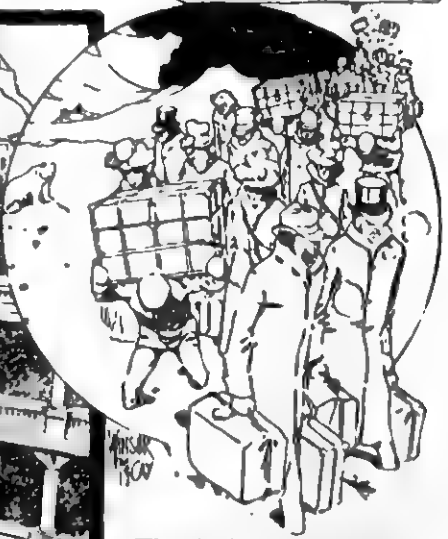
THE IMPERIAL ..... CITY OF PHILYORGO.



CARRYING MY BUREAU ALL THE ELECTRIC LIGHT FIXTURES AND GRAND PIANO ALONG WITH IT"

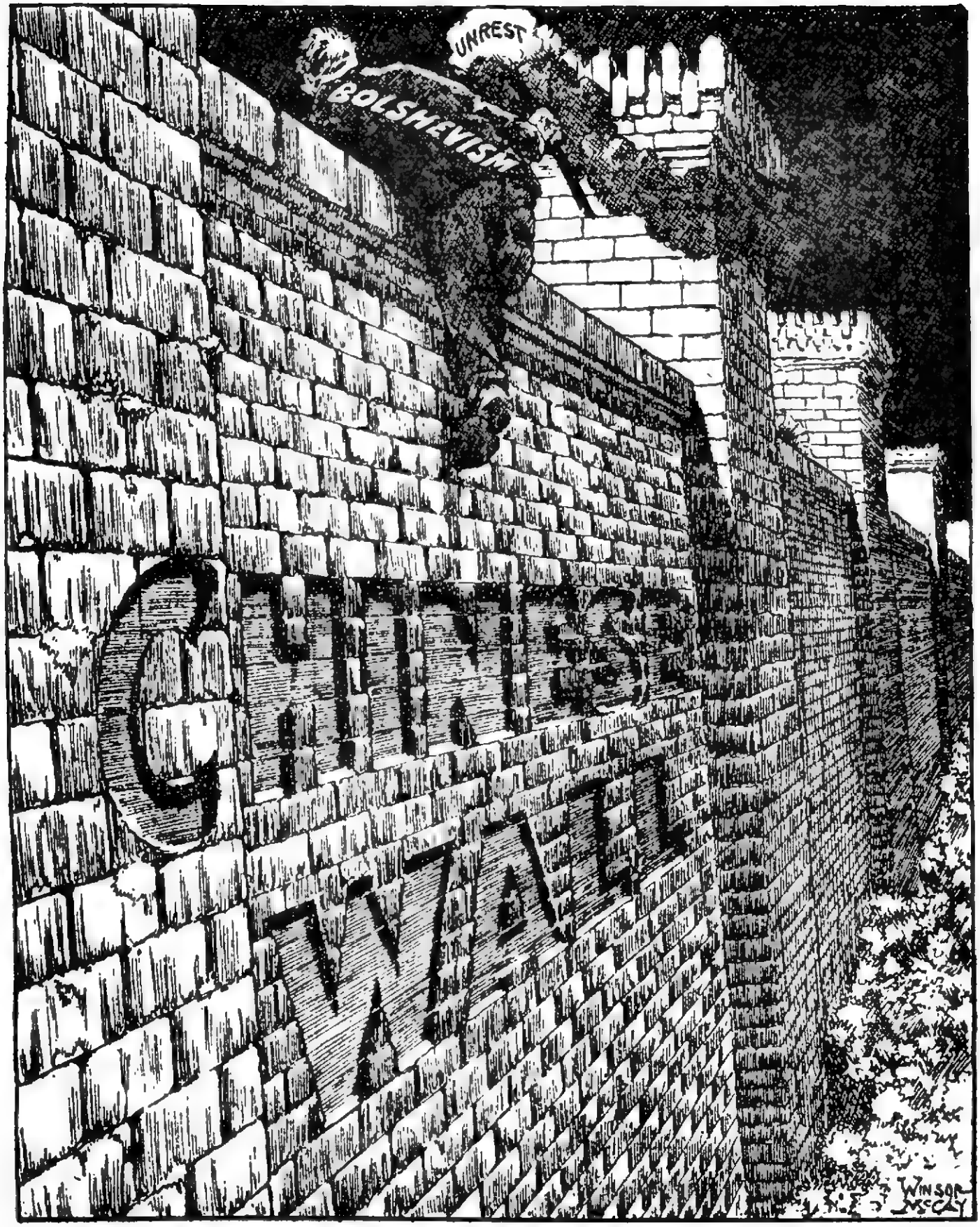


"AT THIS POINT," CRIED THE MEGAPHONE BRED PILOT "WE SEE THE SOUTHERN EXPOSURE OF THE CITY OF PHILYORGO"



A STRANDED FLORODORA COMPANY WALKING HOME FROM THE NORTH POLE

Trying To Start Something



Safety First For the Pedestrian-Straphanger

WHAT CITIES WILL RISE?

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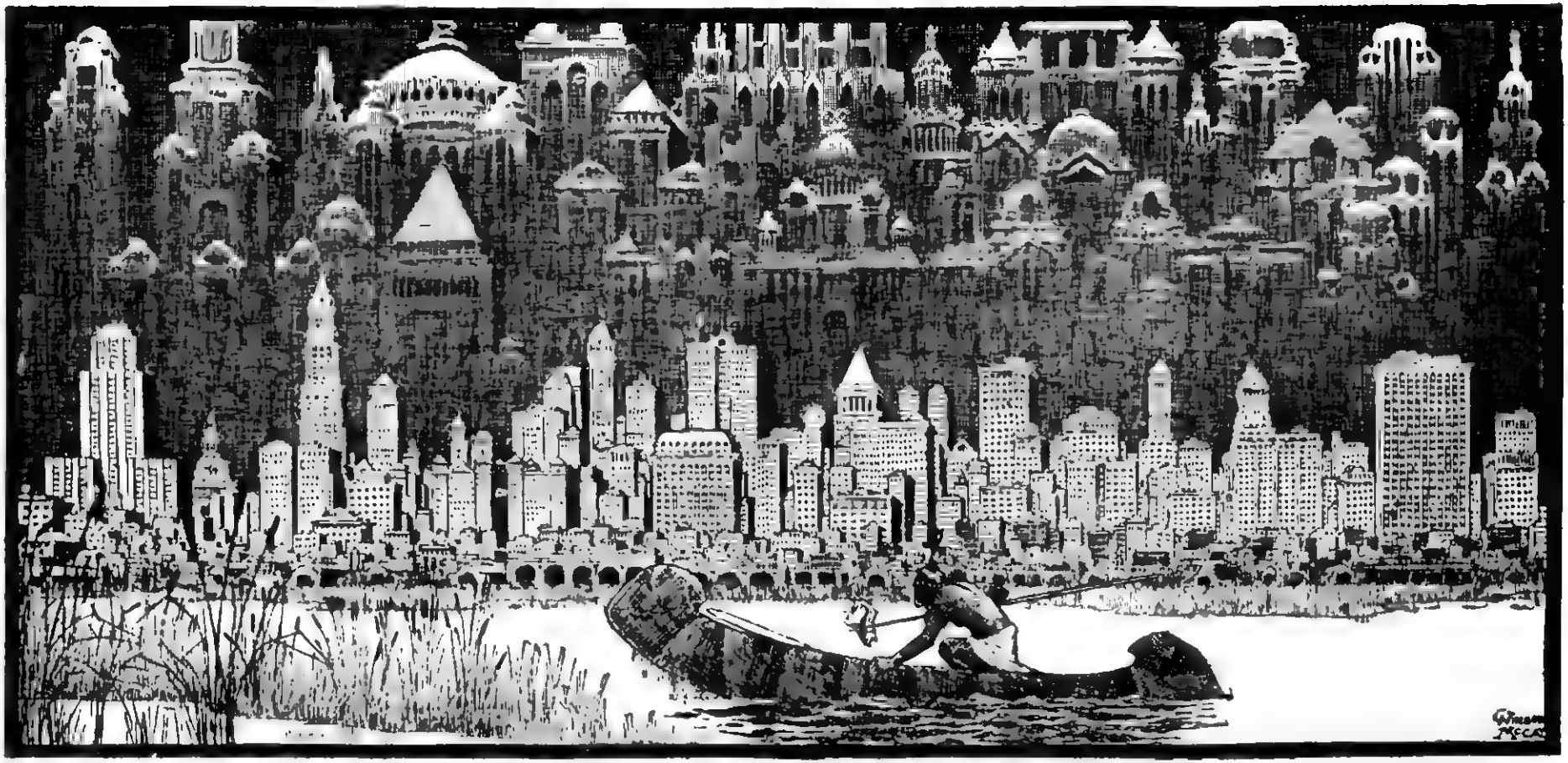


STEAMERS FOR EUROPE
IMMIGRATION
DEPORTATION
UNDESIRABLE ALIENS

When Comics Wore Toppers

BY JOHN HELD JR
TWO WEEKS-FOURTEEN DAYS - 336 HOURS AND 20,160 LONG LONESOME MINUTES BEFORE I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN - I'LL NEVER LIVE THROUGH IT!
EVERY MISERABLE SECOND WILL BE LONGER THAN A LOSER'S ALIBI - MAYBE THE SUN WILL BE SHINING BRIGHT FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD, BUT LIFE TO ME WILL BE DARKER THAN THE INSIDE OF A COW -
I WONT EAT - I WONT SLEEP I ONLY HOPE THAT I CAN KEEP FROM JUMPING IN THE RIVER; WHEN YOU RETURN YOU MAY FIND A GRAY-HAIRED OLD WRECK OF THE LIGHT-HEARTED HANDSOME YOUTH THAT YOU LEFT BEHIND -
OH, DARLING! IT MAKES ME FEEL SO GLAD TO HEAR YOU TALK THAT WAY!
IT MAKES YOU FEEL GLAD?
I SIMPLY COULDN'T BEAR IT IF I THOUGHT YOU WERE ENJOYING LIFE WHILE I'M AWAY - I'M REALLY WILD WITH JOY TO KNOW HOW MISERABLE YOU WILL BE, WHEN I'M NOT WITH YOU!
THE OUTSTANDING FEATURE OF A WOMAN'S LOGIC IS THAT IT IS SO LOGICAL!

The top strip to *Merely Margy*, a forgotten classic of the Roaring Twenties.

Once upon a time newspaper and syndicate editors told cartoonists "We want more for our money. Create a new feature to go above your Sunday comic strip."

Thus the "toppers" were born. (In some cases the cartoonist ran the "top strip" below the main strip.)

The period of the toppers was from the late 1920s into the late 1940s, at which time half-and third-page sizes became the norm.

Sometimes a character was taken from the main strip for this feature, but usually an entirely new character was used.

The NEA Service used toppers that had no relationship to the established feature. Roy Crane drew a small *Wash Tubbs* as a topper for several years until, upon asking for more money, he was told to draw a Sunday strip. *Captain Easy*, a character from the daily, began and the small *Wash Tubbs* Sunday disappeared.

Fred Lasswell tells me that, when he was assisting Billy DeBeck on *Barney Google*, DeBeck allowed him to receive the proceeds from the *Bunky* topper. Al Smith, when assistant on *Mutt & Jeff* to Bud Fisher, reportedly had the same arrangement with *Cicero's Cat*.

Some cartoonists added extra sidebars: film strips to cut out, cartoon lessons, finish-the-picture, jigsaw puzzles and the ever-popular paper doll cut-outs.

The topper space gave some cartoonists the opportunity to form a "comics club," often offering membership cards and premiums. This gave them a chance to test the readership.

"Comic bucks"—paper money—and "comic stamps" became fads for a time, causing ill-tempered comments from parents who got the funnies after the kids had used the scissors.

Occasionally top strips became successful, separate features. Alex Raymond's *Jungle Jim* (*Flash Gordon* was the main event) was such a strip. *Fritzi Ritz* by Ernie Bushmiller had a topper, *Phil Fumble*, that worked in that fashion.

A few cartoonists made a switch—their daily feature becoming, in effect, the topper, and a new strip becoming the main feature. Walter Hoban put *Jerry on the Job* above his new *Rainbow Duffy*; Harry O'Neill created *Bumps* for the large strip with his daily character, *Broncho Bill*, used as the topper.

Milt Gross took the *Count Screwloose* of 1929 and make it the topper to *Dave's Delicatessen* in the early '40s, but Gross was forever changing his strips' titles.

Sidney Smith's Sunday strip was *Old Doc Yak* until 1919 when the Sunday featured Doc Yak selling Andy Gump his car, "Old No. 348," after which *The Gumps* took the Sunday spot, Doc moving to the bottom.

One effect was that the newspaper could drop the topper and use the space for an ad, or just run the topper and sell the larger space to an advertiser. Perhaps this was the opening wedge for the reduced, limited space given Sunday strips these days. . .

—JIM IVEY

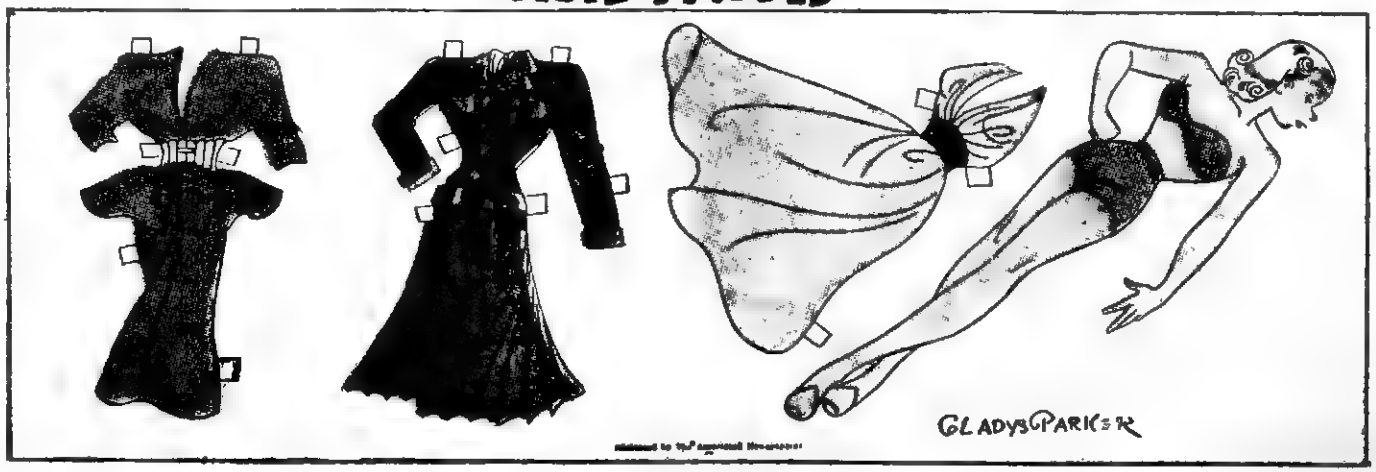
Wash Tubbs
HEY, MISTER, THEY'S A MAN HUNTIN' DUCKS DOWN BY TH' CREEK.
POSTED!
DUCK HUNTIN', IS HE? BY CRACKY, I'LL SHOW THESE POACHERS A THING OR TWO.
HA! I SEE HIM! IT'S THET PESKY TUBBS BOY
POSTED NO HUNTING
I KNEW I'D FIND YOU— NOW GIT HOME!
QUACK QUACK!

Above: While *Wash Tubbs* was an adventuresome daily strip, on Sundays it was a harmless gag top strip over J.R. Williams's *Out Our Way*.
Below: Maw Green was a regular fixture under *Little Orphan Annie*.

MAY I PUT YOU DOWN FOR TEN DOLLARS, FOR THE TOOTYEROWNHORN RELIEF FUND?
NOPE-
DO YOU REALIZE THE NEED AMONG THE POOR, IN OUR CITY?
BETTER'N YOU DO, MISTER-
WHY, I AM GIVING MY TIME TO THIS CAUSE-
YEAH- AND GETTIN' PAID FOR IT-
ER- WELL- I GET A SMALL COMMISSION-
THAT'S O.K. FOR MOST FOLKS, BUT I'M DIFFERENT-
I DONT NEED TO PAY A GUY, TO SHOW ME MY DUTY- I'M DOIN' MY PART- I'M FOR DIRECT ACTION AND PLENTY OF IT-
WHEN YOU'RE AS CLOSE TO THE POOR AS I AM, YOU KNOW WHO NEEDS HELP- MORE HELP AND LESS TALK, IS MY MOTTO
YOU'RE A GOOD GUY- BUT GO SING YER SONG TO THIM HIGH BINDERS, AS NEEDS PRODDIN', TO MAKE 'EM LOOSEN UP-
O.K., BOYS- THIM BASKETS IS ALL TAGGED- AND REMEMBER- DON'T TELL A SOUL WHO SENT 'EM-
AND WHEN YER DONE DELIVERIN' 'EM, HUSTLE BACK AND WE'LL HAVE A FEED, AS IS A FEED-

COUNT SCREWLOOSE
I'M GOING WALKING WITH THE OLD TIGHT-WAD AND AM I GOING TO GIVE HIM A HINT ABOUT A PRESENT?
DID YOU KNOW THAT OLIVER GOLDSMITH HAD GOLD TEETH, COLONEL?
TA DE DA DE DA GIT ALONG LIL' DOAGIE--
I'M THE CLAIM-ADJUSTER FOR THE COMPANY
WHEN I WAS A CHILD IN GOLDFIELD, NEV., I KNEW A BOY NAMED GOLDBERG WHO IS NOW A GOLDEN-VOICED TENOR
GOLD IS THE STUFF WITH KARATS, AIN'T IT?
FOURTEEN KARAT, EIGHTEEN KARAT, TWENTY-TWO KARAT
AH, YES- THAT REMINDS ME --
CARROTS ARE O.K., BUT BEETS ARE BETTER FOR THE COMPLEXION- HERE, DEAR
HAVE A BEET ON ME, PIGGOT-
THAT'S MY POP!
MILT GROSS

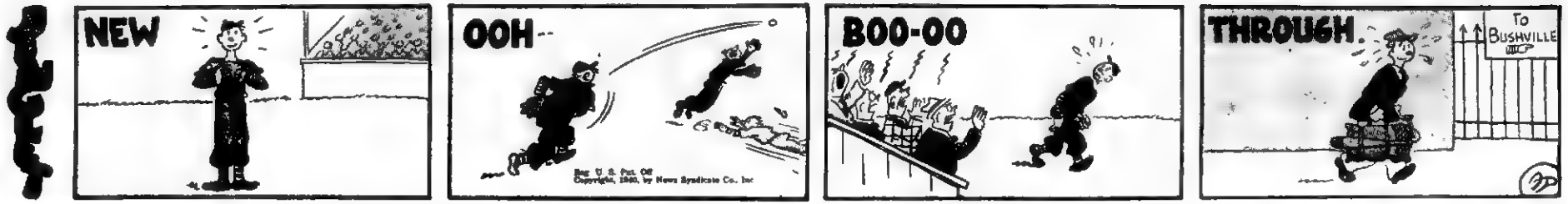
MOPSY MODES

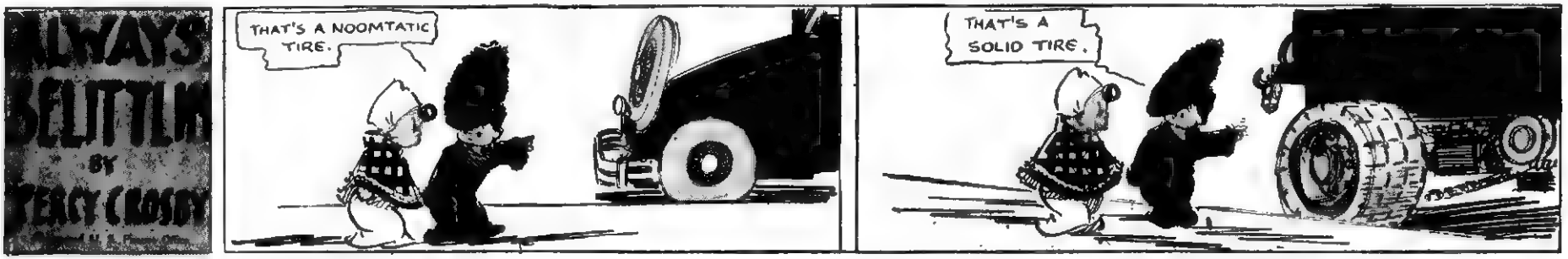


Top: Milt Gross employed two of his famous features on Sundays over *Dave's Delicatessen* (1934).

Left: Many Sunday pages (*Brenda Starr, Winnie Winkle, Boots*, etc.) ran fashion cut-outs like Gladys Parker's *Mopsy*.

Top: Al Posen ran his rhymes for years under *Sweeney and Son*.
Middle: Percy Crosby's kids in this strip were even more cynical and sarcastic than in the main event, *Skippy*.
Bottom: This great chronicle of the 1920s slang was the top strip to *Tillie the Toiler* (1928).

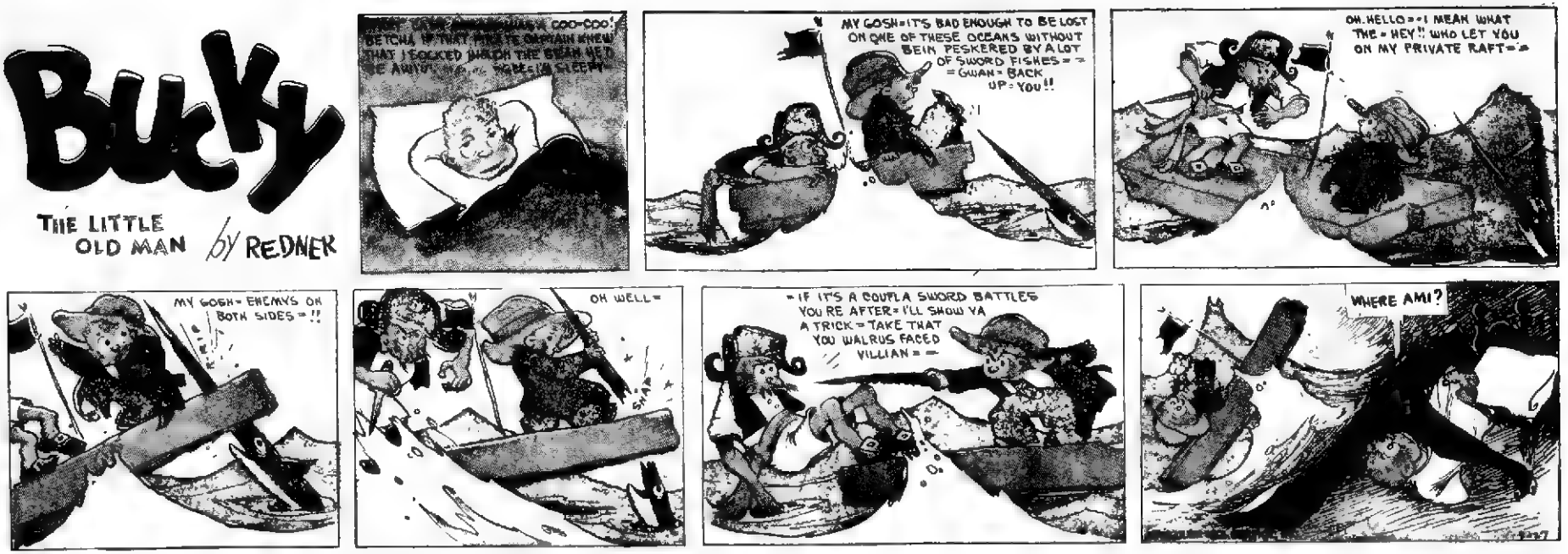




THE COUNTER KIDS
BY RUSS WESTOVER
THIS NEW PERFUME IS A RIOT JEN. IT'S CALLED "MOONLIGHT MURMURS." THE GIRL THAT WORKED AT THIS COUNTER LAST WEEK SPRAYED A BIG ALFALFA MAN FROM THE WEST WITH THIS PERFUME ONE DAY AND THE NEXT DAY THEY WERE SPLICED
AND HOW?
AND HOW? SAY, HE PLASTERED A MILLION BERRIES ON HER BEFORE HE'D EVEN ASKED HER TO PLANT HER TOOTSIES UNDER HIS BREAKFAST TABLE EVERY MORNING. HERE COMES A HANDSOME BOY NOW - YOU NEVER CAN TELL, JEN - HE MAY MEAN THE WORLD TO ME
RING OFF - THOSE BIRDS ARE SCARCER THAN HAIR-PINS
LATEST PERFUME FROM PARIS - "MOONLIGHT MURMURS" IT'S EXQUISITE
WONDERFUL
S W S H
WRAP ME UP A COUPLE OF BOTTLES OF THAT PERFUME I'LL TAKE 'EM HOME TO THE WIFE
WHAT A BUST HE WAS

Bucky

THE LITTLE OLD MAN by REDNER


MY GOSH=IT'S BAD ENOUGH TO BE LOST ON ONE OF THESE OCEANS WITHOUT BEIN PESKERED BY A LOT OF SWORD FISHES= = =GWAN= BACK UP= YOU!!
OH.HELLO= =I MEAN WHAT THE = HEY!! WHO LET YOU ON MY PRIVATE RAFT= =
MY GOSH= ENEMYS ON BOTH SIDES= !!
OH WELL=
= IF IT'S A COUPLA SWORD BATTLES YOU'RE AFTER= I'LL SHOW YA A TRICK = TAKE THAT YOU WALRUS FACED VILLIAN= =
WHERE AMI?

Above: *Bucky* was a latter-day Little Nemo that was a top strip to *Freckles and His Friends* (1927).
Below: Top strip to the classic *Polly and Her Pals* (1931).

Belles and Wedding Bells

BY CLIFF STERRETT

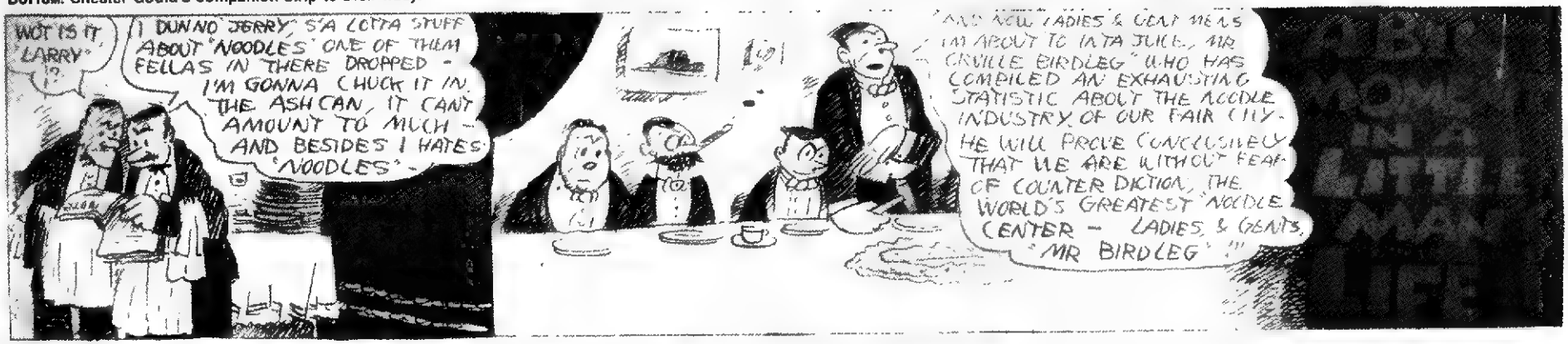
I'VE GOT A SWELL IDEA, ANNIE!
OH, EMIL, WHAT IS IT?
LET'S TAKE MY NEST EGG AND BUY THAT HOUSE!
YOU EXTRAVAGANT ANGEL! I'D SOONER LIVE AT YOUR BOARDING HOUSE FOR THE FIRST YEAR!
SURE Y'WON'T GET FED UP LIVIN' IN ONE ROOM?
OH, NO! I'LL ADORE IT!
and then they were married
Z Z Z
! Z Z Z
Z Z Z Z Z Z
Z Z Z Z
5 24

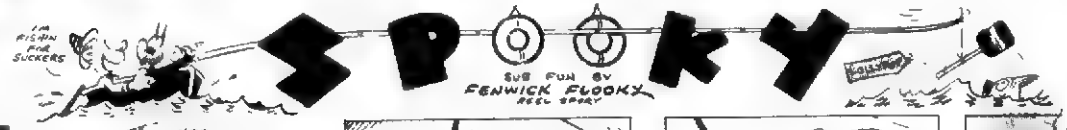
The FOURSOME
Chic Young
NOW, I LOVE MY FAMILY AND ALL THAT, AND I WOULDN'T SAY ANY OF YOU WOULD TELL A DELIBERATE FALSEHOOD OR BE DISHONEST--
WHAT'RE YOU GETTING AT, PA
--BUT I WILL SAY AS SOON AS YOU GET ON A GOLF COURSE, YOU GET CARELESS ABOUT KEEPING YOUR SCORES CORRECTLY
YOU'RE RIGHT, PA -- I'LL BE MORE CAREFUL
I'LL COUNT EVERY STROKE
WELL PLAY THE GAME ABSOLUTELY RIGHT FROM NOW ON
GOLLY, LOOK AT, MOM, -- SHE'S IN THE ROUGH
HOW MANY STROKES HAS SHE?
I JUST TOOK TWO STROKES
TWO? SAY, I SAW YOU SWING THREE TIMES WITH MY OWN EYES
BOO-HOO -- THAT SHOWS YOU DON'T LOVE ME -- YOU'D BELIEVE YOUR OWN EYES BEFORE YOU WOULD ME

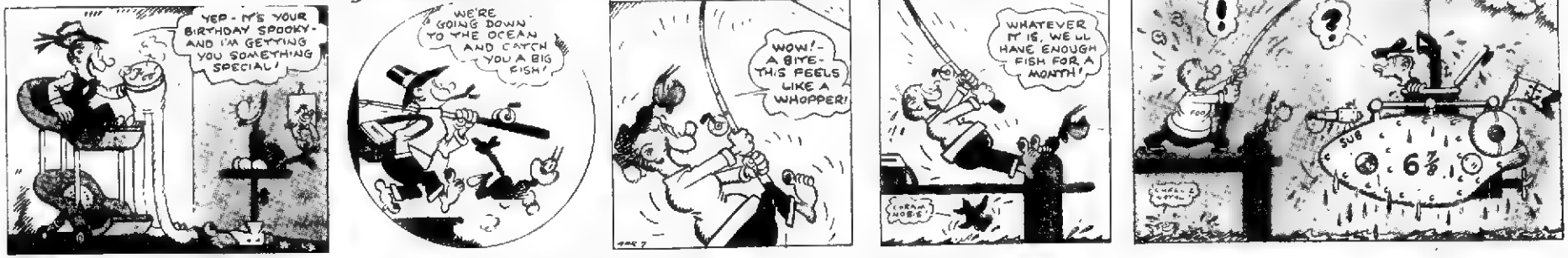
Top: *The Family Foursome* was the first top strip over *Blondie*.

Left: Top strip to *Blondie* most of the Bumstead's life. It was actually written and drawn by Jim Raymond.

Top: George Herriman's top strip to *Us Husbands* (1926)
Center: Bill Holman sub-let his feline lunacy under *Smokey Stover.*
Bottom: Chester Gould's companion strip to *Dick Tracy.*


WOT IS IT LARRY?
I DUNNO JERRY, S'A LOTTA STUFF ABOUT "NOODLES" ONE OF THEM FELLAS IN THERE DROPPED - I'M GONNA CHUCK IT IN THE ASH CAN, IT CANT AMOUNT TO MUCH - AND BESIDES I HATES "NOODLES"
AND NOW LADIES & GENT MEN'S I'M ABOUT TO TATA JUICE, MR ORVILLE BIRDLEG" WHO HAS COMPILED AN EXHAUSTING STATISTIC ABOUT THE NOODLE INDUSTRY OF OUR FAIR CITY- HE WILL PROVE CONCLUSIVELY THAT WE ARE WITHOUT FEAR OF COUNTER DICTION, THE WORLD'S GREATEST NOODLE CENTER - LADIES & GENTS, "MR BIRDLEG"!

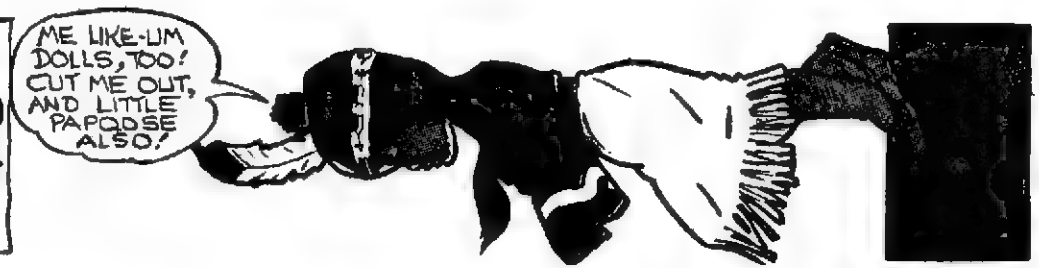


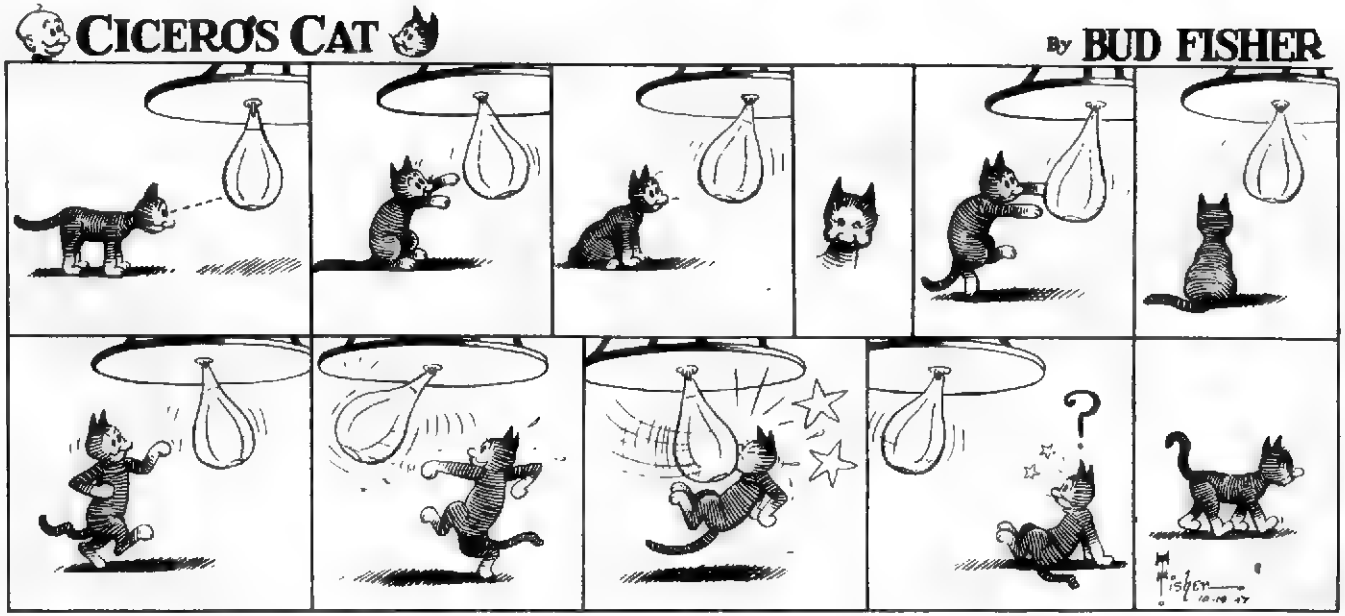

YEP - IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY SPOOKY - AND I'M GETTING YOU SOMETHING SPECIAL!
WE'RE GOING DOWN TO THE OCEAN AND CATCH YOU A BIG FISH!
WOW! - A BITE - THIS FEELS LIKE A WHOPPER!
WHATEVER IT IS, WE'LL HAVE ENOUGH FISH FOR A MONTH!
SUB
6 ⅔

CIGARETTE SADIE
OH GEE - THERE'S JACQUES PAREE - THE WOULD-BE PLAY WRITER OVER THERE AND HE'S MOTIONING FOR ME TO COME OVER - BLAH
SADEE - SADEE - I HAVE HAD ZE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT! MY MASTERPIECE ZAT I HAVE WORKED ON SO HARD ZE PRODUCERS HAVE TURNED DOWN.
FOR WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS I HAVE WORKED EVERY MOMENT ON ZAT PLAY! FOR THREE YEARS I HAVE DONE NOTHING ELSE! WORK, WORK, WORK -
I SEE - ALL WORK AND NO PLAY -
TRACY'S LATEST TRIUMPH - THE BRINGING TO JUSTICE OF "ALEC PENN" ALIAS "B. BELLAS" ALIAS "COUNT GORDON", SUPPLIES THE SUBJECT FOR TODAY'S STAMP
ALEC PENN

COMIC STAMP.

T.N. TOMATONOSE MULLINS. MOONSHINE'S FATHER'S SECOND COUSIN.



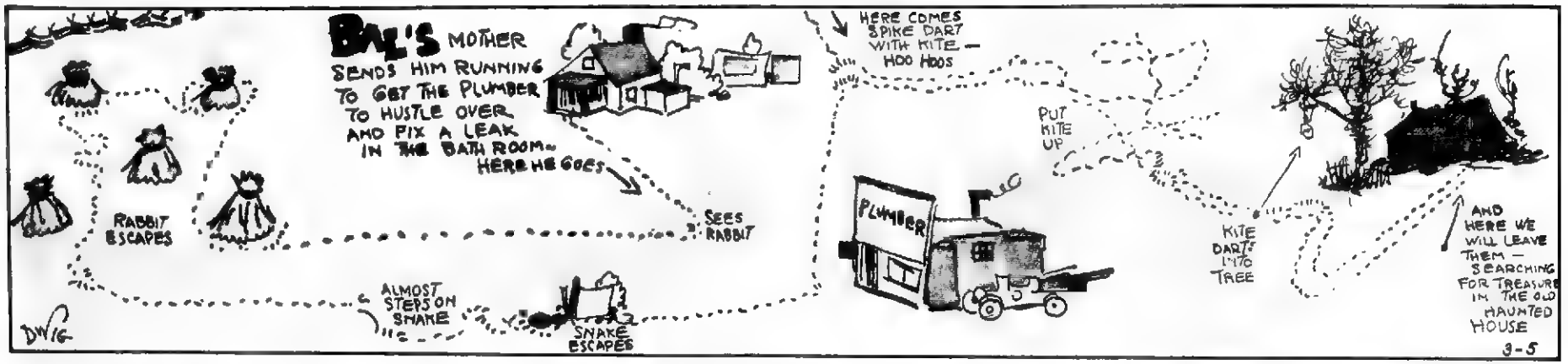


Left: The top strip to *Mutt and Jeff.*
Top: *Kitty Higgins* ran under *Moon Mullins.*
Middle: Red Ryder's sidekick lent his name to a companion feature by Fred Harman.

Top: *Looie the Lawyer,* once a daily by young Martin Branner, became the companion to *Winnie Winkle* in later years.
Middle: Dwig's bird's eye view was fondly remembered from newspapers and *Famous Funnies.* It ran with *Nipper.*
Bottom: Top strip to *Joe Palooka.*

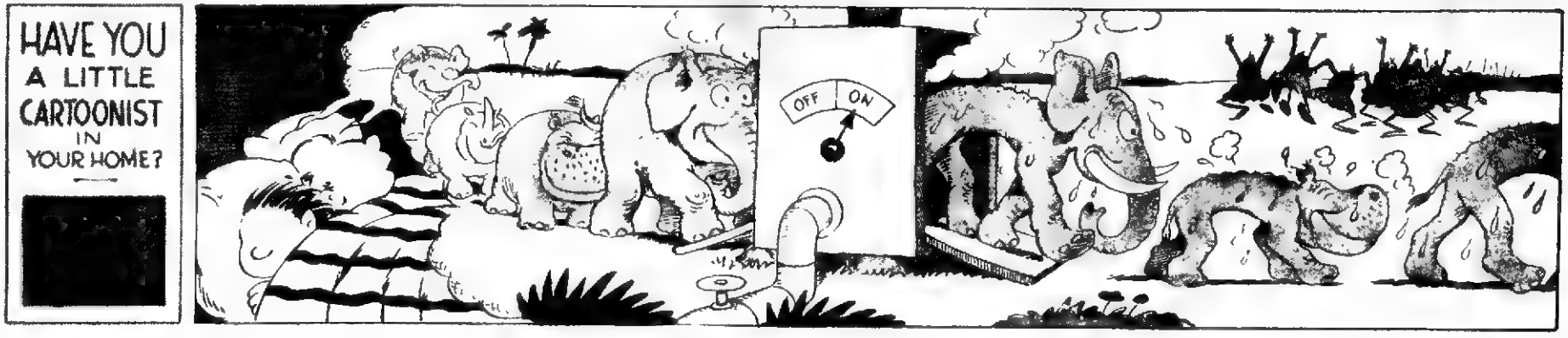
LOOIE
ARIEL, HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO GET THOSE CHICKENS RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER THE OWNER'S NOSE ??
EXPLAIN TO TH' JUDGE, AR EL!
A'NT NO JEE IN SPLAININ' TO YO'LL JEDGE -
EF'N YO' WAS TO TRY IT, LIKE AS NOT YO'LL GIT FULL O' BUCKSHOT AN' NOT GIT NO CHICKENS, NUTHER -
EF YO' WANTS TO ENGAGE IN RASCALITY JEDGE, YO' BETTER STICK TO DE BENCH WHAR YO'ALL AM FAIR!!

Footprints on the Sands of Time


BAL'S MOTHER SENDS HIM RUNNING TO GET THE PLUMBER TO HUSTLE OVER AND FIX A LEAK IN THE BATH ROOM— HERE HE GOES
HERE COMES SPIKE DART WITH KITE— HOO HOOS
RABBIT ESCAPES
SEES RABBIT
PLUMBER
PUT KITE UP
KITE DART'S INTO TREE
AND HERE WE WILL LEAVE THEM — SEARCHING FOR TREASURE IN THE OLD HAUNTED HOUSE
ALMOST STEPS ON SNAKE
SNAKE ESCAPES
DWIG
3-5

FISHER'S HISTORY OF BOXING
1-1
IN 1853 JOHN C. MORRISSEY CLAIMED THE AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP AT BENICIA, CALIFORNIA.
HE HAD COME WEST WITH HIS PARENTS FOR THE GOLD RUSH
PAP - I'M GOIN' EAST AN' FIGHT FER MONEY!
MIGHTS WELL JOHNNIE - HAINT NOBODY LEFT T'FIGHT ROUN' HERE.
HE FOUGHT JOHN HEENAN IN LONG POINT, CANADA, AND BEAT HIM. HE REFUSED TO GIVE A RETURN MATCH RETIRED FROM THE RING, BECAME A N.Y. STATE SENATOR AND CONDUCTED THE FIRST RACE MEETING IN SARATOGA!
MORRISSEY FOR STATE SENATOR THE PEOPLE'S PET
MORRISSEY AND THE FINAL DANGER RAIL

Below: Readers could draw Hans and Fritz over Rudoph Dirks's *Captain and the Kids* (1928).
Bottom: *Hawkshaw*, originated by Gus Mager, ran for years over *Captain and the Kids* by Dirks.

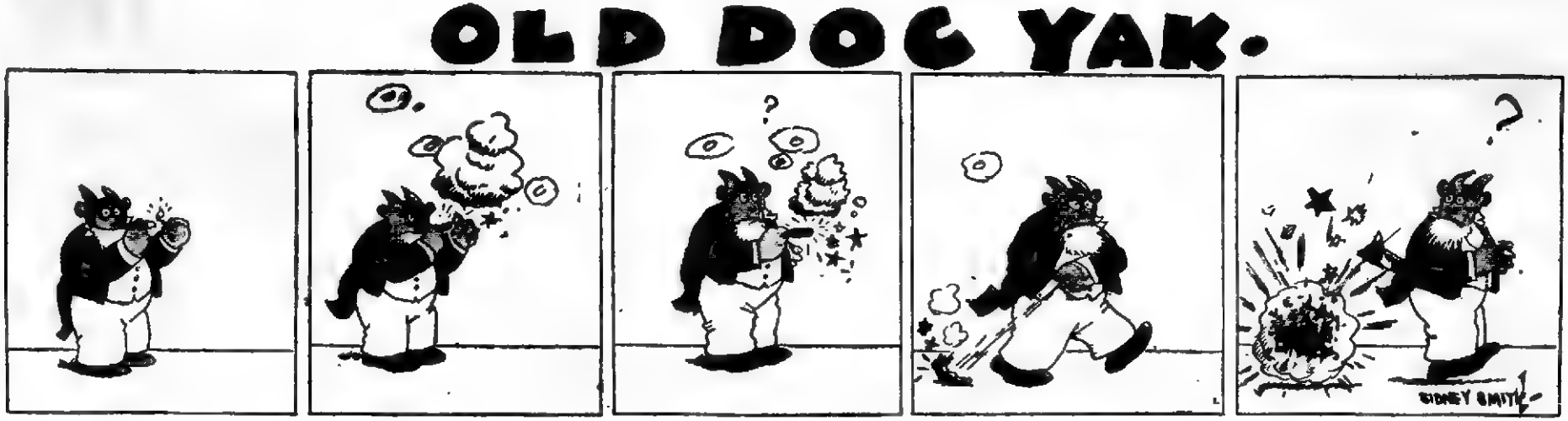


HAWK SHAW THE DETECTIVE
© 1930 by United Feature Syndicate, Inc.
THE ENIGMATIC EPISODE OF THE GARRULOUS GAZELLE BY WATSO
HAWKSHAW - I AM GOING MAD! THE IRON DEER ON MY LAWN JUST SPOKE TO ME
WHAT DID IT SAY?
GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF DUMBELLO - WE'LL LOOK INTO IT
THERE IT IS - I DISTINCTLY HEARD IT SAY "HELLO DUMBELLO, - HOW ABOUT A KISS?"
SEE - WHAT DID I TELL YOU?
MY! MY! SKINNY! - THAT'S A RANK CIGAR YOU'RE SMOKING!
PERHAPS IT'S RIGHT!
OW!
YOUR TALKING DEER IS MERELY OUR OLD FRIEND MR. BUFFOONO CONCEALED IN A SNOW DRIFT - ANYTHING FOR A PRACTICAL JOKE!
WELL I'LL BE-
CAN'T A GUY PLAY A HARMLESS PRANK WITHOUT GETTING BURNT UP!?
3-5

LENA PRY
by
MONTE BARRETT
JACK W. McGUIRE
I'M SORRY, MISS LENA - THERE AIN'T ANY SALT - I FORGOT TO ORDER ANY -
THAT'S ONE NEW YEAR RESOLUTION I WISH YOU'D MAKE, EFFIE - TO QUIT FORGETTING THINGS

COSTUMES OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
JANE ARDEN'S WARDROBE
AROUND THE WORLD
COSTUME OF AMERICAN INDIAN
J.W.McG
NEXT WEEK JANE HAS THE COSTUME OF THE WESTERN COWGIRL

Above: These were the toppers to *Jane Arden*. **Below:** For years, *Old Doc Yak* was the strip neighbor to the South of *The Gumps*.



MING FOO

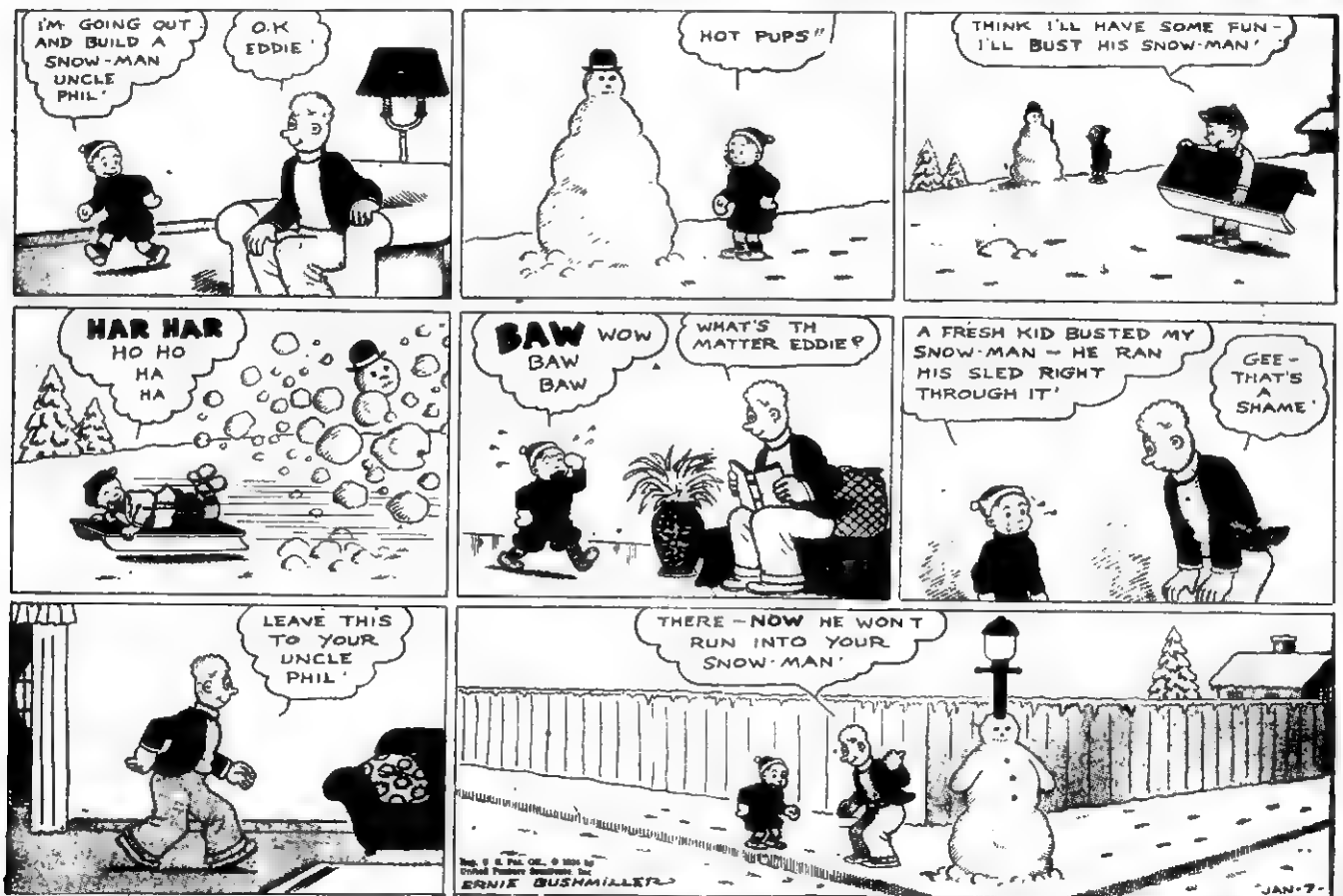
BY BRANDON WALSH

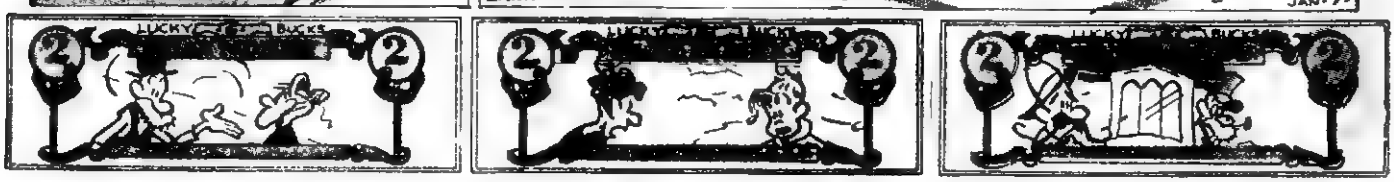
WITH THE DANGERS OF THE UNDERGROUND RIVER BEHIND THEM-OUR FRIENDS SEEK A WAY TO RESCUE THE TWO WHITE CAPTIVES FROM THEIR SAVAGE ENEMIES ——

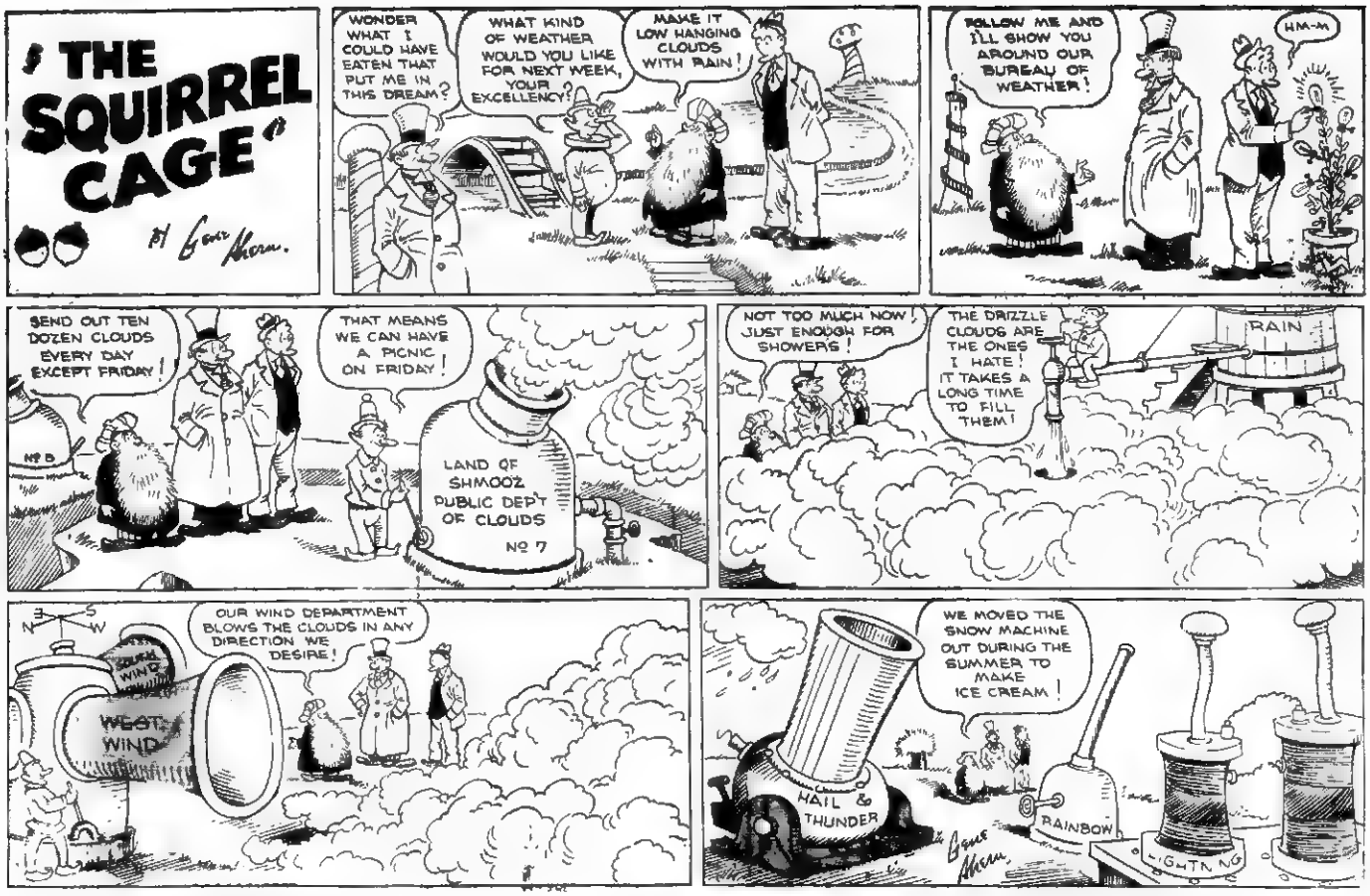
OUR WELL CONTROLLED SILENCE MUST BE PRESERVED UNTIL THE MOST AUSPICIOUS MOMENT!
THE LLAMAS ARE CARRYING LOADS OF BREAD TO THE PRISON!
WE MUST UNLOAD THE BREAD WITHOUT ANY UNUSUAL DELAY!

GOLLY, TOM- I HOPE I DON'T SMOTHER!
IT'S A DESPERATE PLAN, MATEY- IF IT FAILS?!
THIS COMMONPLACE PERSONS TREMBLING FEET SHALL ADVANCE TO THE GATE - PRAYING FOR AUSPICIOUS OMENS TO ATTEND HIS EVERY MOVEMENT!

Above: Arguably a more exciting feature than artist Nicholas Afonsky's main feature *Little Annie Rooney* (1935). **Below:** Top strip to *Fritzi Ritz* (later Nancy).


I'M GOING OUT AND BUILD A SNOW-MAN UNCLE PHIL'
O.K EDDIE'
HOT PUPS!"
THINK I'LL HAVE SOME FUN - I'LL BUST HIS SNOW-MAN'
HAR HAR HO HO HA HA
BAW BAW BAW WOW
WHAT'S TH MATTER EDDIE?
A FRESH KID BUSTED MY SNOW-MAN - HE RAN HIS SLED RIGHT THROUGH IT'
GEE - THAT'S A SHAME'
LEAVE THIS TO YOUR UNCLE PHIL'
THERE - NOW HE WON'T RUN INTO YOUR SNOW-MAN'
ERNIE BUSHMILLER
JAN-7-




THE SQUIRREL CAGE
By Gene Ahern.
WONDER WHAT I COULD HAVE EATEN THAT PUT ME IN THIS DREAM?
WHAT KIND OF WEATHER WOULD YOU LIKE FOR NEXT WEEK, YOUR EXCELLENCY?
MAKE IT LOW HANGING CLOUDS WITH RAIN!
FOLLOW ME AND I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND OUR BUREAU OF WEATHER!
HM-M
SEND OUT TEN DOZEN CLOUDS EVERY DAY EXCEPT FRIDAY!
THAT MEANS WE CAN HAVE A PICNIC ON FRIDAY!
LAND OF SHMOOZ PUBLIC DEPT OF CLOUDS
No 7
NOT TOO MUCH NOW! JUST ENOUGH FOR SHOWERS!
THE DRIZZLE CLOUDS ARE THE ONES I HATE! IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO FILL THEM!
RAIN
OUR WIND DEPARTMENT BLOWS THE CLOUDS IN ANY DIRECTION WE DESIRE!
WEST WIND
WE MOVED THE SNOW MACHINE OUT DURING THE SUMMER TO MAKE ICE CREAM!
HAIL & THUNDER
RAINBOW
LIGHTNING

Above: One of the most famous top strips (over *Room and Board*) featured the Little Hitchiker, whose usual words were "Noz Shmoz Ka Pop?"
Below Top strip to *Thimble Theatre.*

WHAT ARE YOU INVENTING NOW, PROFESSOR?
APPO
BY
SEGAR
Registered U S Patent Office
ARE YOU MAKING PILLS?
YES, PILLS
R-R-R-R-
CLANK
PLOP
JUST ANOTHER CRAZY STUNT, I'LL BET
OH, YEAH?- SAY, I'VE WORKED OFF AND ON FOR THIRTY YEARS BUILDING THIS MACHINE
CHUG CHUG
WHAT KIND OF PILLS?
HONESTY PILLS-ONE PILL WILL MAKE ANY PERSON ABSOLUTELY HONEST
CHUG CHUG
VERY FEW PEOPLE ARE A HUNDRED PERCENT HONEST- I'LL TAKE THIS ONE AND SEE IF IT WORKS
THERE— IT'S DOWN
WELL- HOW ABOUT IT, DO YOU FEEL HONEST?
SAPPO, HERE'S THE TEN DOLLARS I BORROWED FROM YOU TWENTY YEARS AGO
BY GOLLY! THAT PILL IS THE GREATEST OF ALL YOUR INVENTIONS
11-18

Playwright For Paper Actors

The Allen Saunders Autobiography

Chapter Fourteen

From A Slum Child's Philosophy To America's Favorite Fiction

Along with jazz, the comic strip has been termed one of America's two unique contributions to popular culture. Our strips appear daily in scores of foreign countries. Some years ago, *Life* magazine described comics as this nation's favorite form of fiction. Rube Goldberg called comics "the love-children of journalism."

When was this audacious and durable youngster born? If you are a great-grandfather, you probably would put his birthday in the closing years of the 19th century, when *The Yellow Kid* was begat by Richard Felton Outcault. But, according to one authority on the subject, you would be wrong by five centuries.

Dr. David Kunzle, a California University professor of art, after years of scholarly research during which he evaluated the contributions of such immortals as Leonardo, Goya, and Daumier to comic art, set 1492—the one date every schoolchild remembers—as the year the first true comic strip appeared. It was published in Nurenburg, and—it is interesting to note at a time when humor strips have turned to political and sociological satire—it was a propaganda device, an anti-Semitic tract.

The medium was widely used in succeeding centuries to force attention on injustices and immorality. Comic strips called attention to the atrocities inflicted on peasants by soldiers; they showed sinners suffering punishment for their missteps; they berated kings for making war; and commoners for seeking the pleasures of the flesh.

In the late 19th century, Wilhelm Busch effected a departure from social comment in favor of pure entertainment. His *Max und Moritz* was popular in Germany. Publisher William Randolph Hearst had found it so amusing as a child that, in 1897, he asked Rudolph Dirks to create a similar feature for the amusement of American newspaper readers. *The Katzenjammer Kids* was the result. The name was derived from the German slang word for hangover.

There is some difference of opinion to who originated the comic strip in America. In the early '90s, James Swinnerton drew the *Little Bears* for the *San Francisco Examiner*. The humanized cubs were often shown in a horizontal strip; the drawings were comic. Inevitably, the product was termed a "comic strip." (Much, I might add, to the vexation of those of us who do story strips, as no distinguishing name for these has ever achieved currency and we are continually reminded, accusingly, that we are not laugh-provoking.)

It is Richard F. Outcault, however, who is generally given credit, or perhaps condemnation, for pioneering the now-familiar entertainment feature. Outcault was hired by the *New York World* to produce a Sunday comic for the paper's newly acquired color presses. His *Hogan's Alley*, a single panel cartoon, included in its cast of characters a bald-headed slum child with ears like 747 wings. His complete wardrobe consisted of one nightshirt on which were scrawled in street dialect the urchin's philosophical observations. Yellow ink was used on the nightshirt and the boy acquired a name . . .The Yellow Kid. That name soon appeared on a variety of commercial products and became a profitable licensing property for everything from cigarettes to ladies' fans. And it had the dubious disctinction of inspiring the term "yellow journalism."

The Kid's popularity with readers did not pass unnoticed by self-appointed guardians of public morals. Just as, a half-century later, behavior wardens were to assail comic books, they charged the slum waif with contributing to juvenile delinquency. And their lobby was effective. Outcault sent the little saffron sage into limbo and brought out, tongue-in-cheek, no doubt, *Buster Brown*. Episodes in the life of Buster always ended with a full panel devoted to the story's moral. Buster was shown with a halo above his head as he delivered a solemn little sermon on middle-class ethics. The new feature was a resounding success. Not even the bluest of noses could be elavated in disapproval.

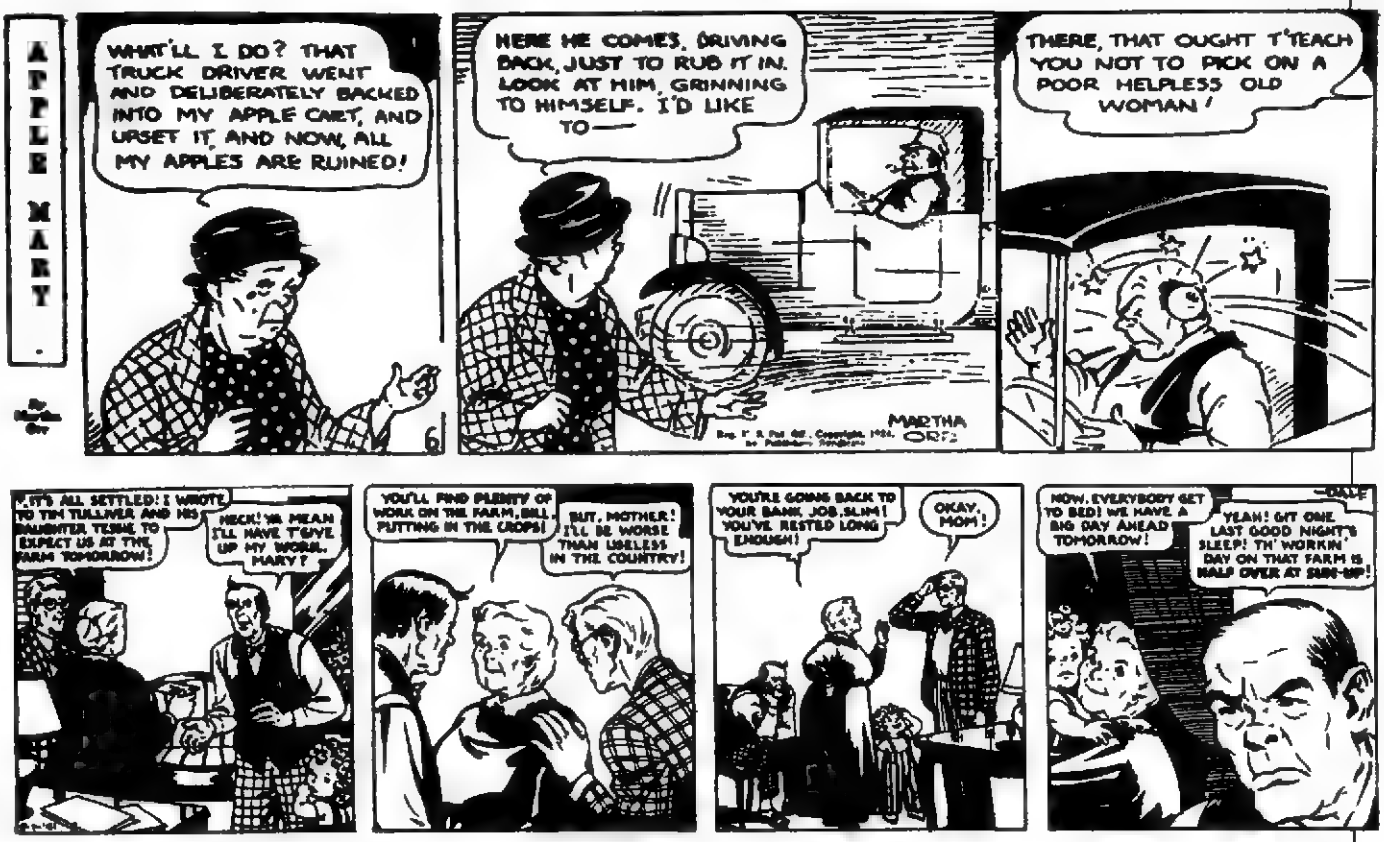
Boys appeared, often without enthusiasm, in Buster Brown-style bobbed hair. Buster Brown suits and pancake hats were licensed. Buster Brown shoes were sold by the millions and are still available today. Mr. Outcault died rich in 1928.

By the early 20th century, comic strips, "the funnies," were firmly established as an accepted form of entertainment for newspaper readers. As well-known as the day's political leaders were F. Opper's *Happy Hooligan*, George Herriman's surrealistic feline *Krazy Kat*, the pre-Freudian dramas of *Little Nemo*, and the nouveau-riche households of Jiggs and Maggie in George McManus's *Bringing Up Father*.

It was in these early years that organizations called syndicates appeared. They were sales agents for newspaper features and, by making it possible for a comic strip to reach, on the same day, millions of readers instead of purchasers of a single paper, they unquestionably account for the longevity of today's veteran strips.

Syndication made *Mutt and Jeff* a reference term for tall and short. (Bud Fisher, he of the extravagant life-style, signed the strip, but for many years Al Smith drew it.) Syndication brought well-merited fame to a California engineer named Rube Goldberg for his zany "inventions" and put his name in dictionaries as synonymous with "ludicrously complicated."

For one who has been a comics buff since pre-kindergarten days, it is with great reluctance that I omit reference to any of the literally thousands of strips that have appeared during the past seven or eight decades, some to hold the stage briefly, some to be as familiar to today's readers as they were to our


APPLE MART
WHAT'LL I DO? THAT TRUCK DRIVER WENT AND DELIBERATELY BACKED INTO MY APPLE CART, AND UPSET IT, AND NOW, ALL MY APPLES ARE RUINED!
HERE HE COMES, DRIVING BACK, JUST TO RUB IT IN. LOOK AT HIM, GRINNING TO HIMSELF. I'D LIKE TO—
THERE, THAT OUGHT T'TEACH YOU NOT TO PICK ON A POOR HELPLESS OLD WOMAN!
MARTHA ORR
W. IT'S ALL SETTLED! I WROTE TO TIM TULLIVER AND HIS DAUGHTER TESSIE TO EXPECT US AT THE FARM TOMORROW!
HECK! YA MEAN I'LL HAVE T'GIVE UP MY WORK, MARY?
YOU'LL FIND PLENTY OF WORK ON THE FARM, BILL, PUTTING IN THE CROPS!
BUT, MOTHER! I'LL BE WORSE THAN USELESS IN THE COUNTRY!
YOU'RE GOING BACK TO YOUR BANK JOB, SLIM! YOU'VE RESTED LONG ENOUGH!
OKAY, MOM!
NOW, EVERYBODY GET TO BED! WE HAVE A BIG DAY AHEAD TOMORROW!
YEAH! BUT ONE LAST GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP! TH' WORKIN' DAY ON THAT FARM IS HALF OVER AT SUN-UP!

grandparents. But even the briefest comment on these would fill volumes, so we shall, perforce, confine this short history of comics largely to those that have been trendsetters.

This means omitting any reference to some great strips, unfortunately, and my choice for the first milestone feature may be challenged. But *Hairbreadth Harry*, created by Charles W. Kahles in 1906, though a burlesque on dime novel melodrama, demonstrated that a continued story format, rather than an individual-joke pattern, could be successful in a comic strip's rigid mold. This potential was not fully realized, however, until Sol Hess, years later, introduced continuity in *The Gumps*.

Reluctantly passing over such strips as *Polly and her Pals*, which portrayed the emancipated woman, and that deathless advocate of spinach-for-strength, *Popeye*, we come to our next true trendsetter, *Gasoline Alley*. Frank King's great strip was a spin-off from a one-panel cartoon which genially spoofed the contemporary interest of car-owners in carburetors and oil-filters. Significantly, the strip did not ridicule. Instead, it pictured the daily doings of recognizable average people. And when a baby, Skeezix, was found on Bachelor Walt's doorstep one day, it opened, in today's parlance, a whole new ballgame.

We watched Skeezix grow up, marry, go to war, and struggle to raise a family. No strip had ever before shown characters moving from infancy to middle-age. None has done it since with King's great skill.

Moving to the next milestone, we examine Sidney Smith's Andy Gump, a rather unlikely candidate for canonization. In its early years, *The Gumps* was a humor strip, providing, hopefully, a chuckle a day. Then Smith took on a ghost writer, a manufacturing jeweler named Sol Hess.

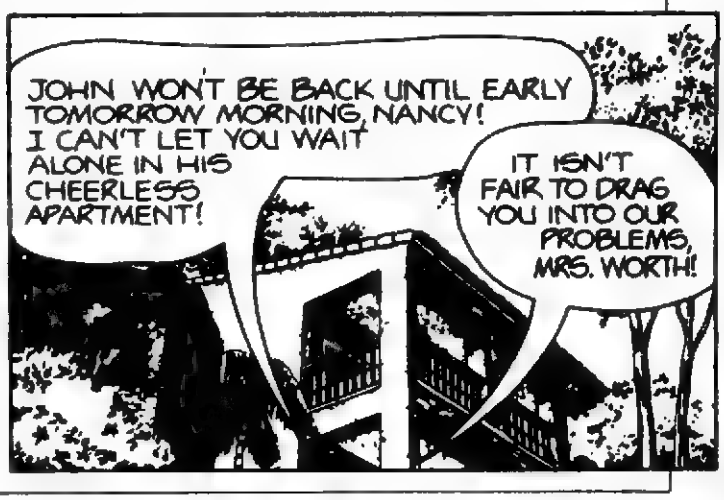
Sol looked like a Roman senator and was as witty as all of Bob Hope's writers taken together. He often lunched with Chicago newspapermen and tossed off one-liners with ease and abandon, gags which later appeared, without credit, in the copy of his fellow-lunchers.

Smith, recognizing a salable talent when he encountered it, put Sol under exclusive contract, and the flow of funny freebies stopped abruptly.

One day over noontime libations Sol voiced the opinion that a suspenseful serial story could be told in a comic strip. His listeners scoffed, but Sol went back to his desk and scribbled the opening sequence of a yarn about Widow Zander and how she complicated the life of Andy's wealthy Uncle Bim. The rest is comic strip history. The strip abandoned its laugh-a-day policy in favor of straight continuity, done in cartoon style, but reflecting real life. When Andy ran for Congress as "The Candidate Who Wears No Man's Collar," copies of the *Chicago Tribune* were snatched up by avid readers while the ink was still wet. In one community, which shall remain mercifully nameless, a candidate used Andy's speeches, word for word, and was elected by a thumping majority. Sol had his hero suffer through a recount, using the daily totals from a recount to which a local judge and close friend was being subjected. Andy lost the race. Sol once explained to me the reason for this: "Congress doesn't need another clown."

So great was Andy Gump's public appeal that a statue of the character was erected in one Illinois town. But success brought Sidney Smith trouble and, in a sense, an untimely death.

Andy was known as "the chinless wonder." No features appeared below his rudimentary moustache. In 1928 a man who had been successfully operated on for the loss of his chin


JOHN WON'T BE BACK UNTIL EARLY TOMORROW MORNING, NANCY! I CAN'T LET YOU WAIT ALONE IN HIS CHEERLESS APARTMENT!
IT ISN'T FAIR TO DRAG YOU INTO OUR PROBLEMS, MRS. WORTH!

SEEDLINGS—*Apple Mary*, by Martha Orr Hassle, began as a tear-jerking Depression strip on Dec. 13, 1934; her strip above is from the first week. By 1941 *Apple Mary* had become a soap-opera, with Allen Saunders writing and another female artist, Dale Conner, drawing the feature. Their byline read "Dale Allen."

from cancer of the lower lip, and who had lived in the same upstate New York town with Smith, filed suit against the artist for a million dollars, claiming that Andy was a heartless caricature of his own pre-operation features. The plaintiff failed to collect, but in surgical annals the absence of a lower jaw is still often referred to today as "the Andy Gump deformity."

On October 20, 1935, Smith had just negotiated a million-dollar contract with his syndicate and had been given an expensive car as a bonus. He had left the Loop and was driving home, his mind no doubt on the favors a benign Fate was heaping upon him. Before he reached his suburban home, he crashed the car and died in the wreckage.

Harold Gray, Smith's young assistant, had been quick to see the possibilities of continuity. He created his own strip, *Little Orphan Annie*, in 1924, adapting the title from a James Whitcomb Riley classic poem. The popularity of *The Gumps* and *Orphan Annie* had an almost immediate impact on the comic page. Where once all strips were aimed at the funny-bone, almost overnight the average comic page was crowded with pictorial fiction. *Tarzan*, Edgar Rice Burroughs' super-best-seller, became a comic, drawn in its early years by Hal Foster, who left to create what many consider the finest example of comic strip illustration, *Prince Valiant*. Another splendid artist, Burne Hogarth, continued the strip.

Chester Gould saw promising story material in police work and, in 1931, brought out *Dick Tracy*. His striking villains, like Flattop and Pruneface, plus prophetic electronic gadgets like the wrist-watch radio, soon catapulted him into the high-income bracket . . . and triggered competition: *Rip Kirby*, superbly drawn by Alex Raymond until his death, like Sidney Smith's, in an automobile accident, and now drawn by John Prentice; and *Kerry Drake*.

I was closely associated with *Drake* during the first decades of his pen-and-ink life. In the early '40s I was asked by Publishers Syndicate to continue a rather bland imitation of *Dick Tracy* called *Dan Dunn*, when its creator, Norman Marsh, gave it up in a fit of temper. In 1943, after working with a succession of illustrators, I teamed with Alfred Andriola (whose *Charlie Chan* had expired from lack of popularity) to produce a replacement which we called *Kerry Drake*. It related the adventures of a blond private detective in the ceaseless war on crime. A bout with ill health several years ago forced me to give up the writing assignment.

Other roads to reader interest in pictorial fiction, meanwhile, were being explored. In 1929, Dick Calkins had introduced interstellar space travel to comic pages in *Buck Rogers*. Like the novels of Jules Verne, it was regarded as amusing science fiction which would never be duplicated in actual life. But men like Neil Armstrong have made Buck's exploits seem almost commonplace today.

Nineteen thirty-four was a golden year in the history of adventure strips. Milton Caniff, a gifted writer and an artist whose style has influenced virtually every illustrative cartoonist working today, introduced *Terry and the Pirates* in that year. There is a temptation to pause here and devote pages to "The Rembrandt of the Comics," as he has, with justification, been called. But brevity demands that we say only that Milt raised the quality of comic strip entertainment to new heights, giving the art form a respectability not equalled before, or surpassed since, his day.

Following World War II, Milt left *Terry* (when, I am told, his syndicate refused to give him the copyright to his creation) and launched *Steve Canyon*. A master of plotting involving the military, he has found war-making less acceptable to readers disenchanted by the Viet-Nam fiasco and his strip deals today almost entirely with stories about civilian life. But the touch of a master fictioneer is still evident.

In the middle '30s, artist Elmer Woggon and I collaborated on *Chief Wahoo*, a humor comic featuring, for the first time, an American Indian. A few years later, when readers' interest had swung from humor to serial stories, we turned it into today's adventure strip, *Steve Roper*, now written by John Saunders and drawn by Fran Matera, who succeeded artist William Overgard. Prolific fictioneer Lee Falk started *Mandrake the Magician* in 1934 and *The Phantom* two years later. Roy Crane, whose distinctive drawing style was an unusual blend of cartooning and illustration, gave us *Wash Tubbs*, with humorous continuity. In 1943 he created *Buz Sawyer*, which deals seriously with the picaresque life of a soldier of fortune.

Until the '30s, serious continuity strips had concerned themselves pretty generally with war, space-exploration, and crime. But a strip called *Apple Mary*, started in 1934, quietly won a substantial following by depicting the rigors of life during the Great Depression.

Inspired, perhaps, by a hit movie, *Lady for a Day* featuring May Robeson, it starred a dumpy, pugnacious matron named Mary Worth who pushed an apple-cart on city streets and coped valiantly with mortgage-foreclosers and bullies who tried to take advantage of her crippled grandson.

The creator, Martha Orr, a niece of the *Chicago Tribune* editorial cartoonist, Carey Orr, saw her brainchild climb to the top of the rating charts but watched a decline in the list of newspaper clients as she kept Mary peddling pippins long after the nation had made a measure of economic recovery.

Near the close of the '30s, Miss Orr married and, expecting a real-life baby, decided to give up *Apple Mary*. The syndicate asked me to write it for a month or so while they found a replacement for her, or decided whether or not to discontinue the feature. I accepted the assignment without enthusiasm. While I did not feel superior to any writing job that kept steak on the table, soap opera just wasn't my field. However, I fitted Mary's activities into my schedule and turned out copy for several months. Then one day the gremlin on my shoulder made an observation that was to bring another dimension to story comics.

I'M ALREADY INVOLVED, DEAR! I ACCEPTED YOUR HUSBAND AS A TENANT!
A MOVE THAT HAS NOT MADE ME TOO POPULAR WITH SOME OF HIS NEIGHBORS!

MATRON OF HONOR—By the mid-'40s Ken Ernst, a journeyman comic-book artist, became the drawing partner to Allen Saunders; the strip had changed from *Apple Mary* to *Mary Worth's Family* (a title evocative of radio serials) to *Mary Worth*. Ernst, who died in 1985, brought an attractive fashion-designer's feel to the successful strip.

No strip, my little helper pointed out, was making a serious effort to offer the sort of fiction dealing with the emotional problems of average people, stories that might interest a reader of the day's magazines for women. I put Mary's apple cart in permanent storage and wrote a series about a spoiled debutante, Leona Stockpool, whose plane landed in Mary's meadow and whose broker father engaged Mary to keep his daughter out of escapades.

There was an amazing reader response, which our syndicate editor, Harold Anderson, was prompt to evaluate. "Stay in that groove," he urged. My artist partner, Dale Conner, cooperated enthusiastically and effectively. We began a gradual transformation of Apple Mary to Mary Worth. When Dale resigned after three yeas to attempt to market a strip written by her husband, then Ken Ernst, one of the professionals most admired illustrators, joined me and shared with me the development of a strip now read from Oakland to Istanbul and which established a new category on today's comic pages.

We did not occupy the classification of human interest strip for long alone. Stan Drake and Elliot Caplin (Al Capp's writing brother) came out with the beautifully drawn *Heart of Juliet Jones*. Dale Messick introduced her girl reporter *Brenda Starr*, and Leonard Starr used the world of show business as background for the romantic adventures of Mary Perkins in *On Stage*. And I found myself leading an unlikely protege into the scene.

As chairman of Toledo's Mental Hygiene Center, I was involved in bringing a young psychiatrist, Dr. Nicholas Dallis, to the city. At our first board meeting, he confessed that his consuming ambition was to write a comic strip, one tracing the history of medicine. I told him that, commendable as his desire was, such a feature would not succeed. Readers want entertainment, not enlightenment. But a story about a handsome young doctor's involvement with his patients might be a winner. Others, including even Rube Goldberg, had tried doctor strips and failed, because they were laymen and, inevitably, made their ignorance of medical practice apparent.

The result of our conversation, and of subsequent conferences, was *Rex Morgan, M.D.* on which two artists, Marvin Bradley and Frank Edgington, collaborated. Their working method was unique. Bradley, who lives near Chicago, drew the figures in each release. A character mounting a staircase, for example, floats, leg uplifted, in mid-air. Brad mailed the drawing to Edgington, who put a staircase under the figure. The blending of the two artists' contributions to the drawing defied detection. With *Rex Morgan* firmly established, Dr. Dallis went on to author *Judge Parker*, drawn by Harold Ledoux, and *Apartment 3-G* drawn by Alex Kotzky. He has retired from practice and lives now in Scottsdale, Arizona. I have always regretted a little my part in his success. The world needs good psychiatrists, of which Dr. Dallis was one, far more than it needs comic-strip writers.

There is a hard-to-kill myth that comics are written for children. Nothing could be further from the facts. Surveys show that almost all children read, or have read to them, at least one strip, but few features have ever achieved any degree of longevity by appealing exclusively to young readers. Some comics *about* children, however, have scored a success that almost defies comparison.

In 1950, a strip titled *Peanuts*, written and drawn by Charles Schulz, appeared in eight newspapers. It introduced some very small children and a dog named Snoopy. The children talked and apparently thought like adults. The dog expressed himself in what the trade called "thought balloons." For several years the strip attracted little attention. But its readers were rapidly becoming a cult. And by the end of the decade, *Peanuts* was being recognized as the most phenomenally popular comic in history. It spawned hundreds of byproducts, plus stage and television versions. The income today from the strip and licensed commercial products is in the tens of millions.

Two single-panel comics about children have attracted a following comparable to that of *Peanuts*. One is *Family Circus* by Bill Keane. The other happens to prove the fact that I have an uncanny gift as a false prophet.

Early in the '50s, a young cartoonist sought me out in a California hotel and asked for my adivce on marketing a comic he had in mind. He was a regular contributor to magazines and I greatly admired his work. But when he announced that he planned to do a kid strip I cited the competition and urged him to stick to freelancing. Wisely, he rejected my advice and sold a panel to a leading syndicate.

On my studio bookshelves I have a volume of *Dennis the Menace* reprints. On the flyleaf Hank Ketcham has drawn a likeness of his lovable little imp saying: "If it hadn't been for Uncle Allen I'd never have been born." Hank sure knows how to hurt an adviser.

Humor strips of general appeal had not suffered from the introduction of adventure and human interest stories, nor from the strong competition of mirth-provoking moppets. In 1934, Al Capp, a master of satire often compared to Dean Swift, introduced to the world *Li'l Abner*. Fifteen years later, Walt Kelly's *Pogo* leapt from a brief stay in a New York journalistic failure to world acclaim in hundreds of newspapers. Expatiating on the quality of these two classics would be like taking space to say that Shakespeare wrote pretty good plays.

It was in the early '50s that comic-strip humor took a giant leap forward—or backward, if you are a conservative traditionalist. The trend-setters brought with them a sophistication and an irreverence that would have left F. Opper and Sidney Smith agape, and probably aghast. Gone today are the kick-in-the-pants, the "Pow!," the labored puns, the taboos so rigidly enforced and respected. The humor is as modern as this minute. The dialogue is salty. The jibes are often brutal. Al Capp and Walt Kelly unquestionably started the trend, but even they were more inhibited, less caustic, and it must be admitted, less effective.

In the vanguard of the new invaders was a pixie named Johnny Hart, creator of *B.C.*. His cave-dwellers, ants, and dinosaurs, drawn with a sparing line, made their bow in 1958 and were warmly received. It was a cartoonsit friend, Brant Parker, who first interested Hart in comic art and, after *B.C.* had won a loyal following, the two collaborated on a second zany comic, *The Wizard of Id*. Since then Parker branched out with a wild burlesque on the Foreign Legion, *Crock*.

The new school of strip humor, with adult dialogue and deliberately primitive artwork, has another stalwart in Mell Lazarus, whose *Miss Peach* includes a cast of precocious characters found in any schoolroom: the she-tyrant, the wretched coward, the fall guy, and the reckless romantic. More recently Lazarus created *Momma*, a paradigm of the maternal meddler in the lives of her offspring.

It was a young man fresh out of Yale, Garry Trudeau, however, who brought about in an incredibly short time the most radical revolution the comic strip profession has het seen. His *Doonesbury*, which he developed in the *Yale Daily News* as an undergraduate, was released by a fledgling syndicate in 1970. At the outset, it seemed a highly unlikely candidate for success. The drawing is amateurish. Trudeau habitually repeats a composition, line for line, in three, or even more, panels. His lettering is eye-straining and his verbiage often reads like excerpts from a Ph. D. thesis.

Moreover, he coolly ignores all taboos obediently observed by past comic artists. Profanity abounds in his copy. Forbidden subjects like homosexuality are treated as acceptable targets for humor. Commercial products—beer, patent medicines, motor cars—are mentioned by name in a way that

KAREN REPEATS THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HAS LEFT FRANK SHOCKED AND SILENT···
YOU ARE THE ONLY PERSON I'VE TOLD, MR. CRAWFORD! BUT I··I'M DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL!

smacks of free advertising. Public figures are mentioned by name and lampooned to a point that would seem to invite libel suits.

But Trudeau has a brilliant mind, a quick wit and an editorial writer's grasp of current history, sociology and philosophical trends. *Doonsbury* is seldom carried on editorial pages but it won a Pulitzer Prize in 1975 for political cartooning. Most importantly, Trudeau has established strong rapport with young counter-culture readers. When the strip's content is too radical, or in extremely bad taste, and the editor leaves it out for a day, young anti-establishment fans block the newspaper's switchboard with protests.

In the category of traditional gag-a-day humor strips, few, if any, have equalled the success of *Beetle Bailey*, by Mort Walker. No one would have predicted, with the growing aversion to anything pertaining to war, that a strip about a hapless, goldbricking GI would be as popular today as it was a quarter-century ago. But the warm humor that made it General Eisenhower's favorite comic gets the same response today as when now-paunchy veterans were scheming to avoid K.P. duty.

In 1966, *Ebony* magazine carried a well-researched article charging that the American comic page was "lily white," that the blacks who did rarely appear in strips were stereotypes or examples of racist ridicule. The integration so familiar to television viewers and movie audiences, it was pointed out, had no parallel on comic pages.

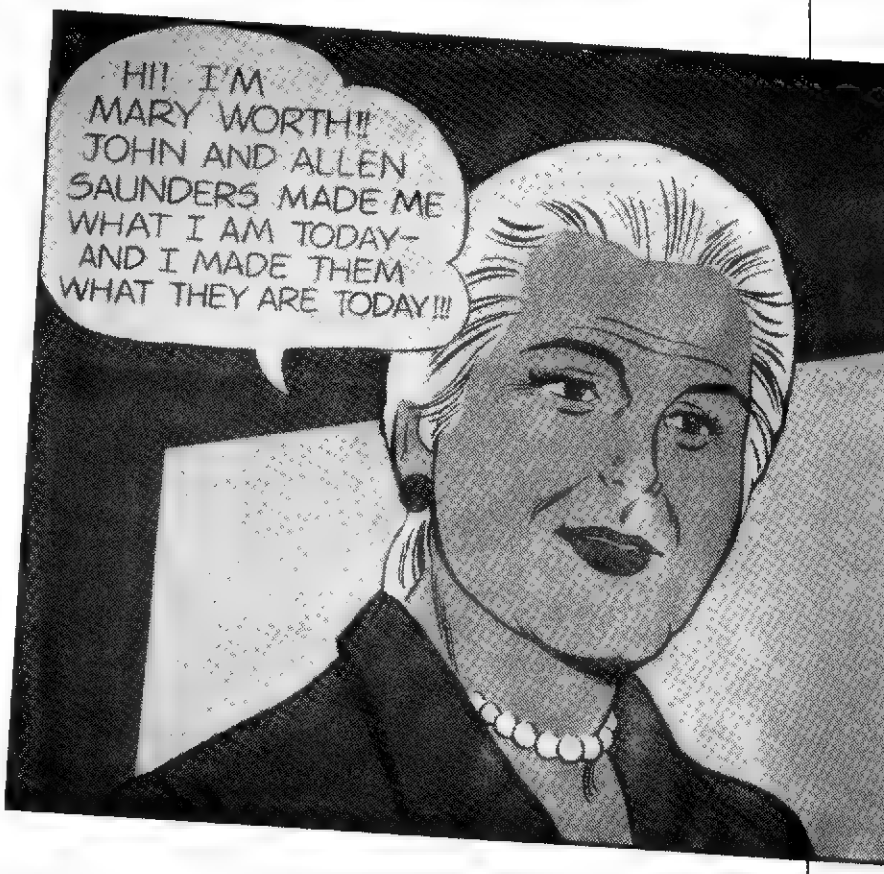
True, Morrie Turner, a black artist, had successfully launched an integrated humor strip, *Wee Pals*, the previous year, but no story-strip featuring both black and white characters in leading roles had ever been offered to newspapers by a syndicate.

To meet this situation and correct it, Field Newspaper Syndicate teamed my son John and an excellent illustrator, Alden McWilliams, to collaborate in 1968 on *Dateline: Danger!*, an adventure strip featuring Danny Raven, a former black football star, and Troy Young, his white partner, as correspondents for a global news service.

The stories were expertly plotted and the art work was as polished as could be found on any comic page. Acceptance was wide and immediate. Surprisingly, foreign papers, from the Far East to Finland, quickly joined the long list of clients.

Impressed by the feature's success, another syndicate brought out, a year later, *Friday Foster*, written by Jim Lawrence, a seasoned author of adventure strips and boys' books, and beautifully illustrated by a Spanish artist, Jorge Longaron. With a glamorous black high-fashion model in the title role, it too seemed headed for a long life.

But after less than six years, *Dateline: Danger!* was discontinued and the demise of the lovely Ms. Foster followed almost immediately. Why? Probably because, despite *Ebony's* contention, the black newspaper reader really doesn t care whether members of his race play roles in pictorial fiction. Whatever the reason, it seems highly unlikely that the integrated strip will ever try a comeback.



I wonder whether *Mary Worth* has started another trend. On September 27, 1976, a deeply troubled high school senior, Karen Cooper, the prettiest and smartest girl in her class, was shown telling the kindly superintendent, Frank Crawford: "I must drop out of school. I am going to have a baby."

It was the first time an unwed mother had appeared in a comic strip. The reaction was immediate and dramatic. Within hours, I received phone calls from NBC, CBS, and the Canadian network, from *Newsweek* and *Playboy*, from radio stations as far away as California, from United Press International and the Associated Press, from newspapers all across the continent, even including the *New York Times*, which publishes no comic strips.

The invariable question was: Did this mean that story strips henceforth will deal with today's social and sexual concerns as frankly as magazine fiction, the theater, and the electronic media have done in recent years?

Personally, I would hope that does not happen. But the restrictions have now been relaxed, in many cases set aside completely. The innocent age of *Little Nemo* and *Krazy Kat* has passed into history. Tomorrow's comic page, conceivably, will be as uninhibited as any sociological documentary.

Playwright For Paper Actors

The Allen Saunders Autobiography

Chapter Fifteen

A New Hand On The Helm

In 1948 my oldest son, John, made a decision that would eventually have a lasting effect on the fates of Mary Worth and Steve Roper.

After several years as a disc-jockey on a small independent radio station, John joined the staff of a larger, network affiliated, outlet. The life of an announcer at such a station is not unlike the classic definition of the life of a pilot: hours of boredom, punctuated by moments of panic. In search of something to occupy his mind while waiting to make short "station-breaks," John came to me and suggested that he would like to try his hand at writing continuity.

I'm sure that many fathers have faced the dilemma as offspring express interest in the family business, but lack the necessary prerequisites. In a large operation such a pretender to the throne can be safely hidden away in the stock room or shipped off to the Peoria office in hopes that he will eventually realize the error of his ways. Unfortunately, the craft of writing continuity strips does not offer a host of what the business world of today calls "entry-level jobs."

Regardless of the number of people the writer contacts in search for ideas, or research, the business of placing the words on paper is a one-man-show. To do it any other way creates the shoddy product that is the inevitable result of rule by committee.

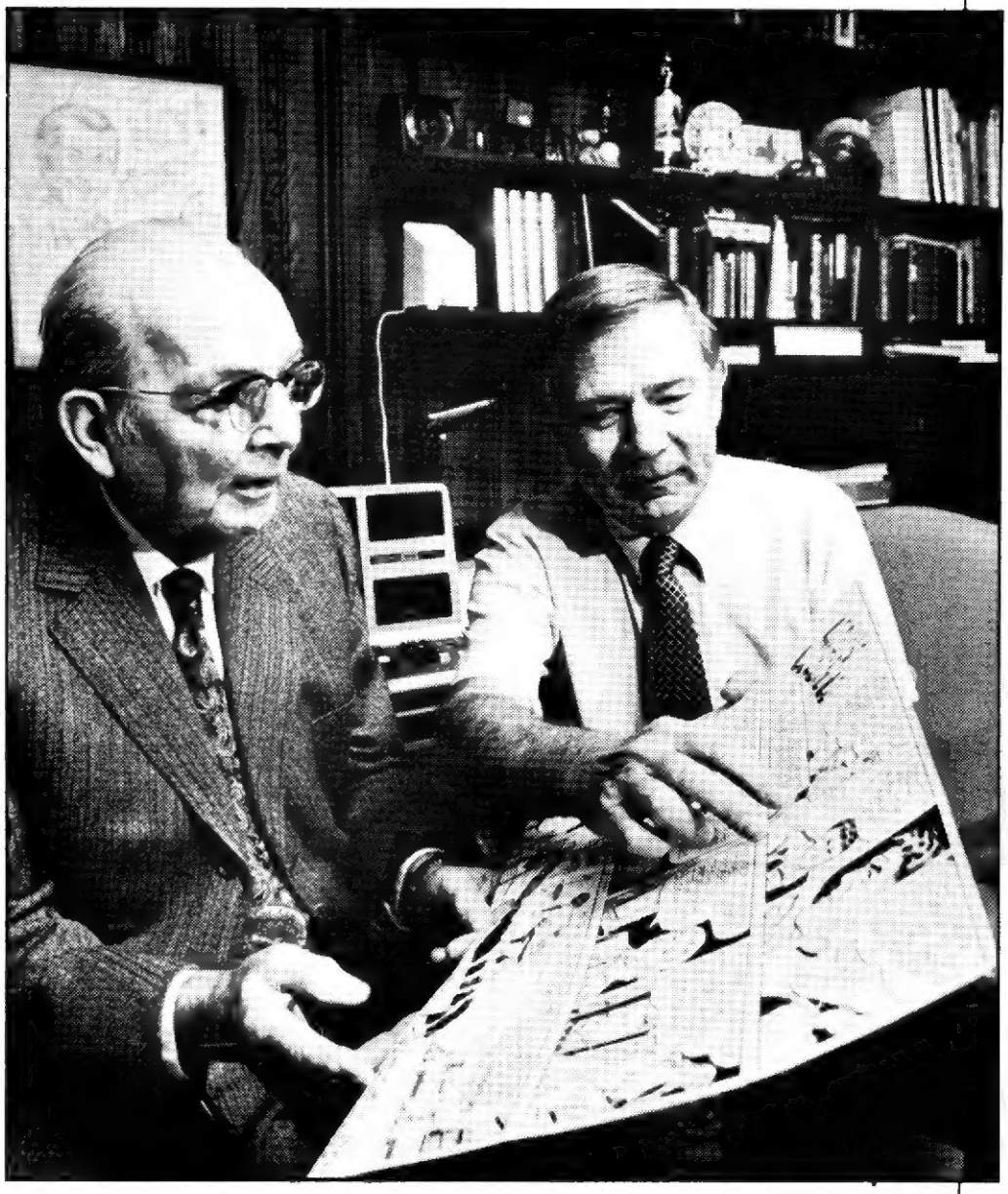
But it would be a strange father indeed who could not feel a slight thrill at the realization that one of his children wanted to follow in the old man's footprints so, with some misgivings, I agreed to let John "help" in the preparation of *Steve Roper*.

This is not to say that my Number One son came to the job without some respect for, or ability to use, the written word. In high school he was a staffer on the school paper. During his stay at Wabash College he wrote for, and eventually edited, the *Caveman*, the humor magazine I had introduced to the campus many years before. As a combat infantryman he had written stories for the European edition of *Stars and Stripes* and early in his radio career he received honorable mention from the Peabody Award committee for the writing and production of documentary programs. I must add that he did all of this with a total disregard for the rules of spelling and punctuation. His early efforts in the preparation of *Steve Roper* copy often made me think I was back in the classroom grading papers.

By the early 1950s, however, a combination of trial-and-error and weekly trips to my office for instruction and consultation, began to produce plot lines and dialogue that were almost acceptable for the *Roper* readership. At that point, with a "handshake contract," John and I entered into a silent partnership. He would do the first drafts of the *Roper* strip and deliver them to me on a deadline. I would make the necessary changes, some of which were drastic, and transfer the text to the "roughs" that were forwarded to the artist. In return for his work John was paid a sum that, in respect to the minimum wage laws, shall remain unstated. Needless to say, it was less than he thought he deserved, and more than I thought his efforts were worth.

We can admit now that his low-level nepotism was kept hidden from syndicate officials for almost a decade. The reason for the subterfuge was two-fold; although many of the well-known writers employ "ghosts," nasty questions can creep into the mind of an editor who suspects that the creator of record is seeking outside help. (Eventually we eliminated the "Allen" from the signature-box in *Steve Roper*, leaving "Saunders" as a joint credit.) The other reason for maintaining secrecy stemmed from a mutual desire to keep the family professions separate in the old home town. John continued his work in broadcasting and by 1960 had gained considerable recognition as a television newsman. His role in the "other media" was kept anonymous to avoid charges of conflict-of-interest. In the mid-'60s, however, prudence and profit dictated an end to the secrecy. Bob Hall, the president of what was then Publishers-Hall Syndicate, called me and asked if I would consider writing a new feature. At that time, three well-distributed strips featured Allen Saunders scripts. I informed the dynamic Mr. Hall that enough was the well-known enough! In the same breath I admitted to Hall that John had been providing me with assistance on *Roper* and suggested that he contact my son. A few days later Hall and the late Bob Cowles arrived in Toledo, and over a martini-paced dinner at Dyer's Chop House, *Dateline: Danger!* was born. It should be stated here that Bob Hall was one of the great innovators of the comic feature era. He had a keen sense of the public taste and he had spent countless hours working with a struggling cartoonist named Walt Kelly to mold *Pogo* into a masterpiece of political satire. His newest brainstorm was destined to require far more patience and understanding. Hall was one of the firt to realize that the comic page represented the last bastion of white supremacy. From the days of the Yellow Kid there had never been a hero or a heroine who was not white. The few black characters who could creep into the "funnies" were relegated to the roles of housemaid, butler, groom, or trash collector. Hall knew the world was changing and it was his desire to mirror that change in the most popular of the American family's art forms. In partnership with artist Al McWilliams, John created an adventure strip that featured a team of integrated heros.

When we consider the number of new comic-page features that are launched each year, and the few that survive the second summer, *Dateline: Danger!* must be viewed as a modest success. The strip lived for five and a half years until, in 1971, a reduction in comic pages caused by the worldwide shortage of newsprint forced the syndicate to cease disbribution.



Allen and John Saunders reviewing a *Mary Worth* Sunday page in their Toledo office.

I admit that parental pride made me fume at the news of the cancellation. John was more philosophic. He felt that he had attempted to do the impossible; i.e., create a character whose thoughts and actions stemmed from an ethnic background the writer had never known and could never completely understand. It must be assumed that black readers sensed tokenism. There are many fine writers and artists in every ethnic group. They alone can correctly reflect the humor, pathos and mores of their race or religion. Those of us who have not "walked a mile in their moccassins" should not presume to represent them.

In the early days of *Dateline* I was listed as a "consultant" and drew a small stipend from the profits. As the income began to wane, however, I agreed to relinquish my share in the hopes that John and Al would be able to avoid bankruptcy. It was also obvious that John preferred to go it alone and, hopefully, profit from his own mistakes.

In the spring of 1972 *Dateline: Danger!* was laid to rest beneath a headstone that bore the inscription, "Here lies a noble effort," and John returned to the family team to work on *Steve Roper* again. He brought with him valuable experience in plotting and character development, a vast number of new friends in the newspaper world, and a devout desire to continue his career as a writer. Ironically, the same industry that had stolen some of the public interest in continuity strips taught one of its own the skills needed to survive. In television, a story is told with a combination of words and pictures. What better definition can you find for a comic strip?

By 1975 a history of purchases and mergers had changed the name of the old Publisher's Syndicate to the Field Newspaper Syndicate, now News America Syndicate. Stung by widespread cancellations of *Pogo* that followed the sudden death of Walt Kelly, the officers of Field insisted that back-up writers be assigned to every feature. Since John was already doing the script preparation for *Steve Roper*, he was the obvious choice for that assignment and I agreed to extend his training to include *Mary Worth*. Today, the transition is complete. At the close of 1979, bowing under the weight of some minor, but annoying, infirmities and growing pressure from the Syndicate, I handed over the pad and pencil to my son and long-time student. The retreat has not been easy. Retirement years are, I suspect, golden only for those who have long established hobbies such as tending gardens or carving wooden whistles. The written word has been my lifelong hobby. I've been fortunate. It was also a vocation that paid me well.

Now there are two names on the door of the cozy office that was my private domain for nearly 40 years. My trusty, but battered, portable typewriter has been replaced by an intimidating electric monster that does everything automatically. (Unfortunately for John, its abilities do not include spelling and punctuation.) The tokens of honor that decorate the office walls have been joined by a few bearing the name of another Saunders, and some of my favorite reference books have been removed from the shelves to make room for more recent volumes. I trust the world will forgive me if I feel a bit like Papa Bear when I walk through the door. As yet I have not asked, "Who's been sitting in my chair?" But the temptation is great.

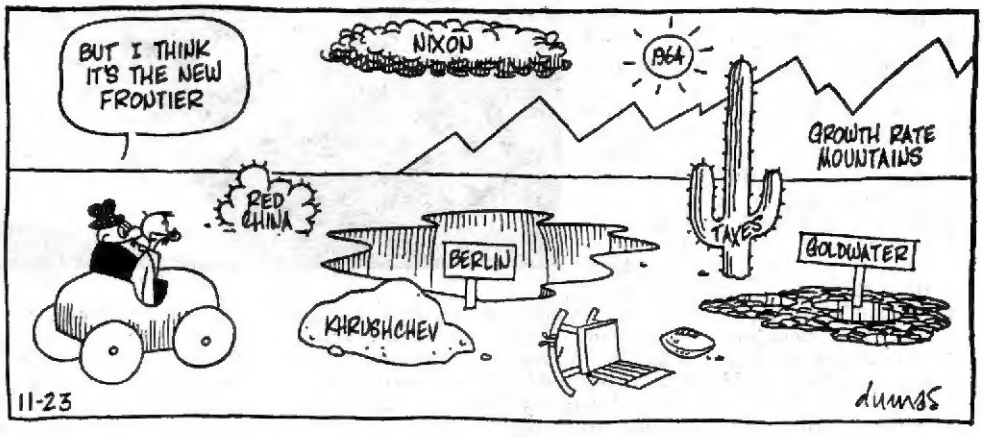
On the other side of the coin, Mary Worth, Steve Roper, Mike Nomad and their friends are players in a continuing drama. The curtain on the next act has been rising every day for nearly a half a century and the audience shows no sign of growing restless or bord. But plays are written by humans, and humans are mortal. If the players are to continue, someone must cast the plot. And, it now appears that, if the players wish to remain on the stage until the end of time, my genes will always be represented in the prompter's box.

My youngest granddaughter, Juliette Morgan, has already won honors for poetry that shows astounding talent for a subteen. She even won a prize for her Japanese Haiku poetry. And, just the other day, my youngest grandson, Matthew Carson, told his mother, "When I grow up, I'd like to write comic strips like Grampa and Uncle John. But first, I think I'd like to be a railroad engineer."

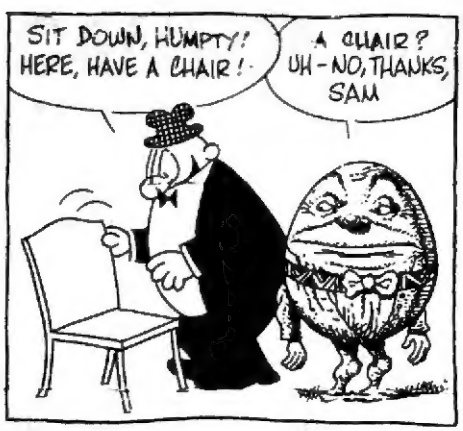
SAM'S STRIP RETURNS!

by Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas

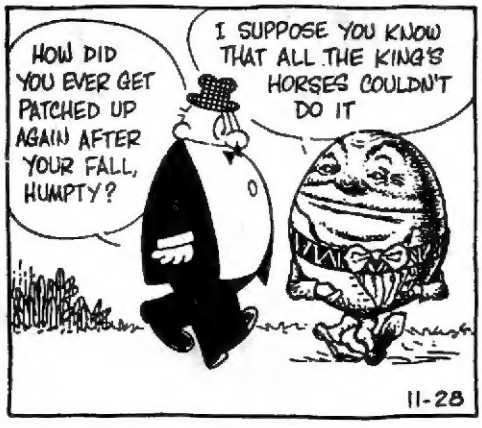
IT ALLOWS ME TO USE WORDS LIKE "BOIING" AND "WHEEE" AND "KLUNK" AND THINGS LIKE THAT
SAM
11-18
© 1961, King Features Syndicate, Inc., World rights reserved.



HUMPTY DUMPTY! IT'S SURE GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
HELLO, SAM
11-27


SIT DOWN, HUMPTY! HERE, HAVE A CHAIR!
A CHAIR? UH-NO, THANKS, SAM

dumas
THIS IS FINE RIGHT HERE
© 1961, King Features Syndicate, Inc., World right reserved.


HOW DID YOU EVER GET PATCHED UP AGAIN AFTER YOUR FALL, HUMPTY?
I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW THAT ALL THE KING'S HORSES COULDN'T DO IT
11-28

EVEN ALL THE KING'S MEN COULDN'T DO IT
YEAH, I REMEMBER

SO I GOT A GOOD PLASTIC SURGEON
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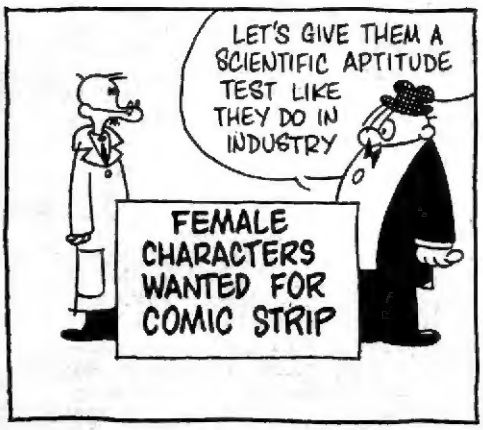
dumas

A READER WANTS TO KNOW WHY WE USE SUCH POOR GRAMMAR IN OUR STRIP
SAM
11-30

WELL, BECAUSE PEOPLE TALK LIKE THAT. IF WE GOT TOO PRECISE IN OUR GRAMMAR IT WOULDN'T SOUND NATURAL
SAM

DOES THAT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, MR. DURANTE?
SAM
dumas
© 1961, King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.


LET'S GIVE THEM A SCIENTIFIC APTITUDE TEST LIKE THEY DO IN INDUSTRY
FEMALE CHARACTERS WANTED FOR COMIC STRIP

HAVE THEM MAKE SOME FUNNY FACES, THROW SOME PIES, SLIP ON BANANA PEELS- STUFF LIKE THAT
FEMALE CHARACTERS WANTED FOR COMIC STRIP
12-1

THEN HIRE THE PRETTIEST
FEMALE CHARACTERS WANTED FOR COMIC STRIP
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dumas

letters

Erudite, Not Pedantic

Dear Rick,

Having grown up with the 12-cent comic and the free funnies in my parents' newspaper, there still remains an irrational twinge about paying three dollars for a comic book of any sort. (Especially when one tends to get Marvel Comics for free when one writes for them.) Thus, regrettably, I ofttimes miss out on some enjoyable ventures through my cheapness. About *NEMO*, however, there was no question: it's more than worth the price of admission.

Part of me says (no offense to your publishers) "Great! No more having to search and see if 'Polychromatic Effulgence' is in this issue of the *Journal*! Now I've got a whole magazine full of it!" (Of course, regretting that it *isn't* polychromatic—but we do have to live in the real world.) For, *although* I grew up on comics, and have a scholarly enthusiasm for their history, there's so much here that I don't know and have never seen. Indeed, I suspect that there'll be years and years of stuff known very nearly only to the Marschall-Blackbeard secret society, now revealed in a semi-mass-market magazine! That part of me is very very happy.

But more than that, the magazine is enjoyable. I've often lamented the alienation between the strip and book worlds in comics—both looking somewhat askance at each other over a sea of different companies, different pay scales, different markets, and to some extent different age brackets—everything but artistic differences. *Cartoonist Profiles* turned me off for that reason—it felt as if I was intruding on somebody else's party—as, no doubt, many strip people must feel reading any of the comic-book fanzines. But *NEMO* is simply giving us treasures that anybody with a love for panel art can drool over, combined with erudite-yet-not-pedantic commentary that is simply a motherlode.

NEMO is, along with *The Spirit*, a must-buy item from here on in. (Now, if only somebody would revive the *Menomonee Falls Gazette*. . .)

Oh, one thing in re your [lead] editorial. "Nemo" doesn't mean "no name," it means "no one." A minor point, but we medievalists specialize in 'em. . .

PETER B. GILLIS
CHICAGO, IL

Much Appreciated, Too

Dear Rick,

Howdy! First of all, let me tell you how much appreciated all the work that you're putting into *NEMO* is on this front. It's quickly become one of my favorite publications, one of the few where I can honestly say I look forward to the next issue. I've been doing a lot of reading lately of and about strips and their creators in order to correct a large deficiency in my background and your publication is a big informational bonanza.

TERRY AUSTIN
WESTPORT, CT

One of the satisfactions of doing NEMO *is reactions from outside the (regrettably small) circle of previously baptized strip devotees. In your cases, Peter and Terry, it's gratifying to welcome comic-book stars to the related-but-certainly-different world of strip and cartoon history.*
—REM

Stamp Out Comics

Dear Richard,

Your publication *NEMO* is the best thing to come along for classic age comic buffs like me. It is terrific, and thanks for doing it and at such a reasonable price.

I grew up in the mid-classic age and there is one thing I remember and wonder why no one has never done anything about it. I was reminded about it in your first issue on one of the *Gasoline Alley* Sunday pages, and that was a comic stamp of Doc. You may be too young to remember when these stamps came out in the comics. I vividly recall when they were first introduced by a whole half page of stamps, and then the various cartoonists picked up the idea and they were regular features for a long time. I have seen a few on old Sunday comic pages, but would really like to see more. I think this would be a *great* idea for a feature article in *NEMO*. Keep up the great work.

ROY NILSON
BENTON CITY, WA

The old comic "money" and stamps were terrific features, and we will pull together examples of those items in an upcoming issue. By the way, about those comic stamps: most of them were drawn for comic strips that no longer exist, which goes to show that some characters never know when they're licked. *—REM*

NEMO invites correspondence on recent articles, suggestions for future coverage, and items of historical, biographical, and bibliographical interest.

Artwork and photos will be considered and will be handled with care and returned to correspondents.

In the meantime, and at appropriate intervals, sketches from the editor's notebooks by artists of the past and present will enliven the letter colums.

Write to NEMO, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura Hills, CA 91301.

From Broom Hilda's Papa

Dear Rick,

NEMO is great! Keep going!

RUSSELL MYERS

Be Kind to Cats

Dear Rick,

I have been enjoying *NEMO* since its first issue and have found your editorials apt. I am writing on behalf of Felix the Cat. I am a collector and fan of the original comic cat. With the recent death of Otto Messmer, I think an appreciation is warranted. The material I would recommend is early '30s material where he visits other planets, fantasy worlds, or conducts weather control experiments. Also special comic plates for English annuals and comic posters used in theatre lobbies. This material is largely unknown and wonderful.

ROBERT A. EADE
ONTARIO, CANADA

Several years ago I interviewed Otto, and when I unearth my tapes and notes, NEMO *will run a piece on this important cartoonist. Denis Gifford and I have discussed proposing a book on Felix, and I hope we will revive our dreams and ambitions in that regard, to persuade the rights-and-permissions and publishing-powers that be.* *—REM*